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# THROUGH ROME ON:

A MEMOIR

OF

CHRISTIAN AND EXTRA-CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

BY

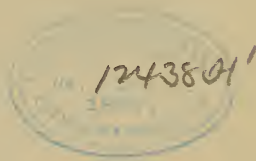
NATHANIEL RAMSAY WATERS.

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## THROUGH ROME ON.

It will be rightly inferred by some readers that this book is indebted for the first part of its title to the very interesting work by Mr. J. M. Capes called "To Rome and Back," which appeared a few years ago in England.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Capes's title has indeed suggested mine ; though the important differences in our two cases have rendered a change of the first word expedient, and of the last indispensable.

This Memoir proceeds from two motives. A false position is most painful to me ; and I am especially unwilling to pass away and leave myself misunderstood on the grave and important subject treated in the following pages. For the other motive : I am impelled by a sense of duty to bear my testimony to what I conceive to be the truth, and thus to answer in my humble way

<sup>1</sup> *To Rome and Back.* By the Rev. J. M. Capes, M. A. London : Smith, Elder & Co. 1873.

to the want which I believe many struggling spirits are at this moment feeling for the sympathy and help that a fellow-thinker may afford them by such a communication of his own experience. Thus, while writing about myself, I am writing about what concerns others not less than myself: and though but few will read the record for the sake of the writer, many, I hope and believe, will find their own thought developed here with sufficient clearness to lead them to forget or forgive the egotistic form necessitated by my task. To the two motives stated, has been joined a feeling as of a duty of mediation upon me, which keeps me straitened until it is performed, and which I have tried to perform in the following pages by speaking very carefully and at length of Catholic doctrine and practice as I have learned them by faithful examination and intimate personal experience.

For the conclusions reached by me and published now to speak for themselves, I will only add in this place, that they are the fruit of long, diligent and conscientious study; that they have been entertained by me in private, though only occasionally expressed to others, for the last twenty-five years, in which time they have been subjected to the most convincing tests which a thoughtful experience of life and a solemn contemplation of death have taught me to apply;

and in fine, that they satisfy my understanding, cheer my heart, and deserve that I earnestly commend them, as I do, to all who are prepared for them.

More than thirty-five years ago I began to seek for truth and peace in Religion. It was not under the influence of excited feeling that I came to this undertaking ; but from a deliberate sense of the obligation of mankind to embrace the word and system propounded by the Sovereign Creator. I had no doubt that there was such a Revelation ; and it seemed the most natural thing in the world when I was summoned to its full acceptance, and the most obvious of duties that I should neither refuse nor delay attention to the call. But not being "converted," in the emotional sense, I did not leap or tumble at once into religious communion ; and not finding myself a ready-made or hereditary church-member by the grace of circumstances, I was not conventionally smoothed and ironed into it, as pleasant children are, but had, as I have said, to seek it, not sparing pains in the search, but striving diligently to avoid taking a counterfeit for the reality ; for, as in Samuel's day, while *the word of the Lord was precious, there was no open vision*. My search soon showed me that the dog-

matic foundations of Protestant Christianity rest on sand, and brought me to acceptance of the Roman Catholic religion as the embodiment of Divine Revelation. I embraced this religion without reserve, strove to model myself by its teaching and spirit, and submitted every point of challenge in my mind to the decision of its unquestionable standards. To be a half-way or "liberal" Catholic was, I rejoice to remember, impossible to me. From first to last, nothing was clearer to me than that the liberal principle and the ecclesiastical are in vital antagonism; and when the former was demonstrated my necessary principle, I gave up the other fairly and squarely forever. After eight years in the belief and practice of Catholicism, I found myself in early manhood arrived by the inevitable working of my intellectual and moral constitution at the rejection of the premise of the Infallible Oracle, on which all dogmatic Christians build their systems of faith. From this renunciation of the underlying assumption of all the creeds, my progress was rapid to the views and state of mind set forth in the later pages of this volume. There are points of thought which draw some minds on with load-stone potency, so that the intervening tracts are very quickly traversed. With me, Protestant churchism had no holding power and could not detain me long;



and in like manner, Deism, or, as our present-day deists prefer to call it, Theism, was impossible as an abiding haven for my mind. I could not go on many months saying *two-and-two* without seeing the obligation to conclude *makes four*, and being satisfied with it.

Though a wilful and spoiled child, I was nevertheless from my very early years keenly, even morbidly, conscientious. I had an intense appreciation of the difference between RIGHT and WRONG, and of the obligation to be right and to do right. Owing to the exceeding delicacy and acuteness of my nervous sensibilities, I was peculiarly sensitive to pain and to pleasure alike, and sympathised readily with those emotions in others. I had a tender compassion for the sufferings of living creatures below man; particularly for the portion of those sufferings inflicted by the cruelty of man, which I regarded with a burning indignation and desire to redress the wrong. I distinctly remember that I was imbued with a strong sense of justice and an appreciation of the Golden Rule. I may say that I received no ecclesiastical training; for though my parents were Episcopalians, they were not of the stricter sort, and I was only baptised in infancy, and taught to believe in God, and to pray, when old

enough for that species of instruction ; and accustomed to go to church and to refrain from games &c. on Sunday. Some occasional attempts were indeed made to teach me the catechism at home ; and I think I learned the Apostles' Creed and the Decalogue. This was Christian discipline in a way ; but it can only in a very modified sense be called ecclesiastical. I never went to Sunday-school, was not included in a confirmation-class, was not even compelled to read the Bible, nor to listen to the reading of it except in the general church services. My first acquaintance with the Golden Rule, as a formula, must have been according to its presentment in the first and third of the synoptical gospels ; but my appreciation of it spoken of awhile ago seems to have been instinctive, and independent of any external enforcement. This beautiful rule of conduct, which we find enunciated by moral teachers in various climes long before the rise of Christianity, and which, rightly interpreted (it is susceptible of a very perverse and mischievous interpretation, though its right sense is simple and plain enough), is the dictate of a healthy conscientiousness always and everywhere, must surely have been coeval with the first blendings of benevolence and imagination in the forming of man's social instincts ; and in these foremost files of time, he would be indeed a monster who

should be born without the root of it in him. In my childhood's casuistry, which I think was very true on this point, the application of the Golden Rule was not restricted to mutual human relations, but was extended to the lower animals, that could not be expected to make a return in kind; nor were the comely ones among these the favourites of my compassion. I pitied most those that suffered most, or that were the most persecuted and abandoned; taking as true pains to help a mangy cat, that was detestable to me in every light but that of the Golden Rule, as a sleek house-pet or a well-groomed pony. Theodore Parker in his Autobiography records an incident of his early life in which conscience spoke to him with an imperative voice in behalf of a helpless little turtle. In reading of this occurrence I have been reminded of a turtle adventure of my own childhood, in which conscience asserted its power in a somewhat similar manner, and with equally effective result. In a country walk with an adult friend and a cousin near my own age, I witnessed the capture by my companions of an unfortunate testudo that was unsuspectingly resting itself by the roadside as we came along. The creature was placed in a basket carried by one of the party, and sentenced to be made a culinary victim on our return to the house. Something called off the others and

detained them for a short time, during which I was required to take care of the turtle. I did "take care" of it, but not according to my friends' intention. The capture had grieved me, but I had had no hand in that. Now, however, I was required to co-operate in distraining the captive, and, horrible thought! in holding it to be cooked alive, as I had sometime been told was the fate of turtles in the American kitchen; a fate which, in my ignorance of comparative physiology, I likened to that of a human victim at the stake. What was to be done? Conscience told me that I was bound to release the turtle, as I should desire and ought to be rescued myself in such a case. There was but one thing to prevent my obeying the inward voice, but that one thing made obedience a matter of no small difficulty. I stood in great awe and fear of the elder of my two companions, and dreaded to displease him by letting the turtle go. This contravening sentiment caused a lengthened struggle in my mind, in which conscience finally prevailed through the force of the consideration that what would befall the turtle if I did not quickly free it was so much more terrible than anything that could happen to me if I did. Acting under the law of my being, I overturned the basket; and the turtle, acting under the law of its being, lost no time in making its escape. The little

incident here related bears, I think, a dialectic relation to the course my mind afterwards took on the subject of religion, and may serve to show how natural and inevitable that course was. Intellect and conscience always worked together in me, helping each other and controlling the will in spite of adverse circumstances. The force of example was apparently less powerful than it commonly is in childhood. My comrades were neither more nor less cruel than boys in general. My father, though a man of great and tender humanity, was yet so under the dominion of habits characteristic of his class and constitution, as to take delight in fox-hunting, shooting, and racing; so that my early recollections are full of whips, spurs, and fowling-pieces, along with hounds, pointers, and blood horses. But though I played sometimes with the slain fox's brush, and handled with a mournful curiosity the stiffened relics of a once innocent and light-some life that were brought in at the close of many a day's sport, I never learned to forget the bond between man and the underlings with sensibilities that are akin to his, and that appeal to his justice, his kindness, and the dignity of his higher nature, not to seek his pleasure in what is agony to them. It increases the hold which my father's memory has on my veneration and affection, that he was always indulgent

towards the compassionate feelings I describe, strange and troublesome as they were in a boy, and so at variance with the impulses springing from his own robust organisation; and that, so far from treating them with rebuke or scorn, he seemed even to sympathise with their manifestation. It was impossible to me then to overlook *the other side*, in this matter of sports, or to satisfy my mind by following the example of people around me; and just so, when the question of religion came up for my decision, it was impossible for me to pin my faith upon the sleeve of any other person, or to be satisfied with anything less than the intelligent approval of my own judgment and conscience.

It was perhaps a prognostic of the future free-thinker, that my mind was agitated at this immature period with crude polemic thoughts excited by what seemed to me the contradictory preachings from the same pulpit of Faith without Works and the importance of such "works" as keeping Sunday after a certain imperfect following of the Puritan model. The clergyman I am thinking of condemned even the opening of a letter on Sunday; and the incongruity between the morning and the evening preaching, as I may describe it, vexed my soul. The dis-

ingenuousness of the prevailing sabbatarian teaching about Sunday, which pretends to a Scriptural foundation for this church festival such as all persons well acquainted with the Bible know does not exist, and which is thought to be doing God service when it abuses the tender faith of childhood by sedulously moulding it in the false impression, became known to me some years afterwards, and awakened a lively indignation at the shamelessness of the pious fraud: but at the time I am describing, my eyes had not been opened on this point, and it was the discrepancy between the solifidian doctrine of the rector in one breath, and his insistence upon the necessity of works in another, that disturbed my peace. It was as if those ancient rivals James and Paul inspired the preacher by turns; only James, with all his zeal for works, could hardly have strayed from the apostolic track so far as to prompt the making of a new-fangled Sabbath out of Sunday. This little stumbling-block was but a trifle at the time; though when I became acquainted with the Catholic doctrine a few years later, it was no small relief to recognise the comparative reasonableness of the estimation set by Mother Church on good works; which she does not stigmatise, as Anglicanism in England and America expressly does in one of its Articles of Religion;



but which she allows to have human merit in unsanctified cases, and when they are supernaturalised by Divine grace, assigns them a share in justification along with faith. Without being under compulsion in the matter, I obtained by degrees a considerable acquaintance, for one so young, with the text of the common English Bible, and availed myself of it with singular independence as armour, as weapon, and as plaything, by turns. A brass figure which I had pounced upon in a lumber-room at the top of the house was set up, secretly and very timidly at first, to represent Jehovah or Shaddai;<sup>1</sup> and the Lion of the Tribe of Judah was personified, if I may so speak, by a wooden image of grave leonine aspect, which seemed competent for any needful miracle of speech or transformation. The Israelites performed in those days prodigies of valour, under my auspices, against the people in possession of the Promised Land, and spilt much blood which required no wiping up afterwards. I was bold enough to cap scripture with my seniors in my own defence; and an amusing recollection comes over me at this moment of the dismay depicted in the countenance of an elderly kinswoman who upon an occasion of frowardness had interposed with a reminder of

<sup>1</sup> I think Bunyan furnished me with the name Shaddai.



the ravens and young eagles in Prov. xxx. 17, when I turned upon her with Eph. vi. 4, which I doubted not was a wholesome admonition to children's elders, and which was at any rate effectual to bring about a drawn battle on the particular occasion. I was a great reader. A vivid remembrance remains of one favourite book, an illustrated copy of Bunyan's *Holy War*, with its grand old hero Diabolus, rearing himself, to my infinite admiration, against the Tower of Mansoul. I do not know how many times a day I scanned this fearful picture, nor how many crumbs of ginger-bread I let fall upon it and the adjoining page; but there is a close association of ginger-bread and Diabolus in my memory to this moment. I had a curious fancy for transcribing *Sterne's Sermons*. Another crony was Barclay's *Apology*, a noble book which I learned to appreciate at a later period. I am disposed to date my acquaintance with Fielding's *Tom Jones* and *Amelia*, and several of the Waverley series, before my reading of either the *Arabian Nights* or *Robinson Crusoe*. It does not seem to me that this early introduction to the novel was attended with any bad effect. There is a kernel of English heartiness in Fielding, which my mind tasted, I think, without any of the grossness of his age entering with it; and as to Scott,—who at any time of life was ever hurt by

him? When in the ripeness of my years I visited the land which he was the one to redeem from the reproach of savage wildness, and to make beautiful in history, in fiction, and in song, its scenes were already dear to me, and were peopled with a host of old acquaintances whom I might, "without all offence of necromancy," as that appreciative reader Bishop Joseph Hall phrases it, call up to give me a welcome in their haunts and homes. Smollett's novels, which are very gross, and, with all their merits, and whatever some critics may say, much inferior to Fielding's, I did not read till some years later, indeed, except *Roderick Random*, not until I was grown. I made acquaintance now, however, with Le Sage in *Gil Blas* and *The Devil upon Two Sticks*. The *Arabian Nights* I read again and again. Surely the child is much to be pitied who from any cause cannot enjoy this book. My copy was a large one-volume edition with many plates; and I have a sore remembrance yet of the borrowing of it by a young neighbour who returned it after a long interval with some of the leaves missing. The difficulty of the roc's egg, mentioned by Mr. Fiske in his *Myths and Myth-makers*, was, I remember, one of my perplexities. *Robinson Crusoe* was soberly interesting, but never excited my enthusiasm. I had a Friday of my

own in a very black lad, my special attendant ; but we were sadly in want of additional savages, and Friday had no cannibal propensities for me to correct, but displayed a most Christian appetite for beef-steak, and, in common with his master, was compelled by domestic tyranny to wear civilised jacket and trousers. From eight to ten I imbibed Peter Parley. Near eleven, perhaps, a strong taste for ghosts was developed in me. To this era belong Mrs. Ratcliffe's romances and *The Three Spaniards*. There were no such superlative ghosts then as we have now. How I should have revelled in *The Wanderer*, *The Haunters and the Haunted*, *A Strange Story*, and the collections of Mrs. Crowe and Mr. Robert Dale Owen ! *Zanoni* did come in while my taste was yet fresh. I was strongly moved by Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, and in a less degree by some of the Ettrick Shepherd's stories. At twelve, James's *String of Pearls* and Irving's *Alhambra* were meet successors to the *Arabian Nights*. About the same time, I was fascinated by Kennedy's fine American novel *Horse-shoe Robinson*. Mr. Kennedy was a friend of my father's, and was regarded by me with a kind of fearful interest as the creator of such wonderful beings as Horse-shoe and Arthur Butler. I read and enjoyed Maria Edgeworth, too ; a writer unhappily little known to young

people of the present day, and whom I am glad to see mentioned as she is in Dr. Hill's *True Order of Studies*. At thirteen I received the greatest impulse in my juvenile career of reading and thinking; of which I shall come to speak presently. I have specified only a small part of my childhood's reading; but I will not pass from this period without recurring to a circumstance belonging to it which grew out of a certain dramatic cast in my imagination, and which has been exemplified in connexion with my Bible reading on a previous page. What I found in books, or was particularly struck with in real life, often so impressed me as to be acted out, with very ample variations of my own, by means of a large collection of broken toys which at odd times and seasons I had gathered round me. I was another Wilhelm Meister with my puppets. There were men, women, children, and lower animals, with their proper names; the dogs being terrible fellows in a fight, and the horses and cows having regular appraisements in their character of personal property. One of the horses, I remember, died of old age; and another, a notably fractious bay, that used to be driven about by a physician of vast practice, which he managed to attend to in spite of the loss of his legs, arms, and head, ran off one day with the empty gig, and committed suicide by

breaking his neck against a lamp-post. It was a very tolerable rendering of the scenes of life, whether as drawn by authors, or as acted on the stage of the wide, wide world. Among other fidelities, one man in his time played many parts. Thus I can distinctly recall Dominie Sampson in the shape of a long green man, one of the crew of a Noah's Ark wrecked on my table-lands; who also did duty on proper occasions as a right reverend bishop. Harry-of-the-Wynd entered into the body of a broken spool, which after shuffling off its mortal coil had gone through the Revolutionary War as General Marion. A chess rook, forsaking his bed and board, became first Sir William Wallace, afterwards Robert Bruce, and at last sunk into a member of Congress, and kept house with his wife at Washington. If "all the world's a stage," these walking gentlemen of mine, that had their exits and their entrances, that loved, and fought, and pranked themselves in wooden imitation of their betters, were surely not the most despicable players on the boards. I vow I have more respect for them to this hour than for many living people I have met. Through my childhood I lived in the faith of a golden age. Earth, as well as heaven, was transfigured to my eyes; and millennial blessedness was the dream of my nights and days.

With my miscellaneous reading after thirteen this book has nothing to do. I will only observe that I did not take up Shakspeare till I was seventeen; when I made a regular winter campaign on that field, with the time-honoured text of Johnson and Steevens. The preceding memorials of my early years have been written as much in the way of a natural proem to the main design of my work, indicating the type of my mind, and showing how I proceeded along the paths of reading and thinking without much leading from the first; as from an inclination to conjure up the past, and to make out of its materials a peace-offering for some of my readers.

The Rev. G—— W—— succeeded Dr. McI—— as rector of St. Anne's parish, Annapolis, Md., in the summer or autumn of 1841, a short time after the death of my father, when I was thirteen years of age. At our first interview Mr. W—— invited me to visit him and look over his collection of shells. I did not fail to make the visit; and after showing me the shells the clergyman proceeded to do what he no doubt considered his parochial duty, by admonishing me as to religion, and proposing that I should begin with his assistance to prepare myself for confirmation.

That I had not received this rite before was owing to my father's unwillingness that I should come to it while I was yet, as he thought, too young to understand its character and obligation; and perhaps there was something of my father's thought in my mind when I said in reply to Mr. W——'s suggestion, that I was not willing to profess Episcopalianism without an intelligent conviction of the superiority of its claims to those of other communions. Mr. W—— observed, that my being confirmed would not put it out of my power to adopt a different form of religion afterwards, if I should think it right to do so: but I rejoined, that I would much rather take pains at first in choosing my religion, than take this step ignorantly, and risk having to change afterwards. So the worthy rector, who was much too sensible and fair to deny the justness of my position, had to go to work to show me how Episcopalianism stands in relation to other forms of Christianity, as he could not induce me to profess it without this instruction. Thus I was a tough young Christian from the start: yet I *was* an inchoate Christian; that is, I had been baptised in my infancy, I took it for granted that Christianity is true, and in some one of its folds of doctrine and worship of binding obligation; and I only sought to find which fold it was my duty to enter; for I held, as it were instinctively, that there is



an essential and irreversible distinction between the TRUE and the UNTRUE ; that of contradictions only one can be true, and hence, that among the contradictory sects all but one must be wrong, and that one I was bound, for God's sake and for the sake of my own soul, to distinguish from the rest and to embrace its system with all heartiness when it was once proved to me. I did not then, and I do not now, see how the theory of a supernatural revelation of positive doctrine can admit of an innocent diversity of opinion as to what the doctrine is, among the people to whom it is addressed. God is no trifler, surely ; and the work of establishing a religious system on earth for the instruction and salvation of men, being His work, cannot be so bunglingly done as that they for whom it is intended may honestly be at fault as to where and what it is. If there is no positive doctrine in the case, if He has only breathed a spirit of goodness into certain chosen vessels, to be diffused through various channels among mankind, that indeed is a different affair ; but that is not dogmatic Christianity. I had lived my thirteen years among Orthodox people, and, without having been strictly drilled to the tap of the "drum ecclesiastick," had imbibed the prevailing view that the Divine Teacher, Jesus, had instituted a visible society, with outward ordinances of discipline and worship, as well as a pure,



sacrosanct doctrine of ineffable things, all derived from him, and guaranteed to last till the end of the world.<sup>1</sup> I deemed it now my sacred duty to distinguish this rightly constituted society from all the pretenders around it, not doubting that its divine characteristics would soon present themselves to my longing eyes. I made no question of the alleged fact of the Christian revelation. When I demurred to instant acceptance of the church system offered me, Mr. W— asked, I remember, if I wished to investigate the truth of Christianity, and I made a rather frightened reply in the negative. I knew nothing about the “evidences”; but I was quite ready to jump all that. All my training and associations made it a terror to me to be for a moment suspected of religious scepticism; and I do not think that I had a moment’s doubt that the true church was from God and might certainly be found. Be it observed, that the horror of doubting, or being suspected of doubting, Christianity in the abstract did not prevent me from questioning the claims of the actual form of concrete Christianity which I knew best and for which I had a prepossession. If I did not identify abstract Christianity with goodness itself, as very likely I did, at least I identified it with external propriety and the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20; Eph. iv. 13.

favour of all whose approbation was valuable to me. It will be seen that the constitution of my mind inclined to High-churchism. I could not look upon the visible organisation of Christianity as a small matter, supposing that organisation to have been ordained by God himself. As will appear a little farther on, I soon had to abandon this supposition of a Divine foundation and Apostolical succession of outward Christianity; and after this loss of its authoritative character, it had less and less hold on my mind, till it recovered the full measure at least of its first prestige under the form of that ancient corporation which is the block from which the heresies that supplied my first Christian materials are chips given to the winds. But at the time now under consideration, I was moved, by natural bias, and by the kind of leading I was subjected to, in the direction of High-church, which insists that there really is such a visible body on earth as the Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of; established and made perpetual by the ascended Lord, to endure "till we all come in the unity of the faith unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." I saw that something of the kind is necessary on the hypothesis of a supernatural revelation; and I was inclined at the outset to believe that I should find Episcopalianism the pillar and ground of the truth and my proper

nursing-mother in holy things. The dignity and beauty of its orders and ritual, its historic name, the social respectability of its membership, all commended it to me. In addition to these claims, it was my childhood's church, the church of my parents, the home church of my earliest recollections. I was ready to accept whatever its advocates had to say for it. Mr. W—— supplied me with books to read on the subject to which my mind now turned with so ardent an interest. The first of these, I think, was *Jerram and Wall on Baptism*, and the next, Chapman's *Sermons on the Ministry, Doctrines, and Worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church*. After reading for some months, I was quite imbued with the argument for the Three Orders and Apostolic Succession. Of course the Bible made a part of my reading; and one day I was troubled to find Paul talking to Timothy about the gift that was in him by virtue, as it seemed, of "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." It may be noted, that my head was so full of the doctrine of episcopal ordination that I attached no importance to the preceding clause, "by prophecy"; which might otherwise have proved still more perplexing. I hastened with my difficulty to Mr. W——, and was comforted with the information that in the Episcopal Church "the presbytery," as well as the bishop, lay their

hands upon the candidate for orders. The further explanation will readily occur to the reader who is a little better skilled than I was then in church terms and hermeneutics. It was a great comfort to throw my burden upon the clergyman, my faith in whom made up for any want of cogency in the argument he offered. This is commonly the case with immature reasoners who have confidence in their guides. It may have been weeks, or months, after the Pauline vexation when I encountered a bundle of more stubborn difficulties, while I was staying in the country, and so could not have recourse at once to my trusted counsellor. The Presbyterian argument which I lighted on in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* troubled me greatly, because I could not answer it, and it showed me that so much more than I had supposed could be said on that side. This effect was increased by a perusal of the Methodist Bangs' *Original Church of Christ*; which very much impaired the force of the Episcopalian argument, and almost won me to an agreement with the author that the constitution of the church was not regarded as a matter of much importance by the Bible writers and primitive Christian authorities. Then the low view taken by the Apostle Paul of marriage<sup>1</sup> troubled

<sup>1</sup> I. Cor. vii. 2, 9, 28, 32, &c.; I. Tim. v. 11.

me ; on which I took counsel with a relative versed in the Scriptures ; who reminded me that the Apostle, by his own avowal, did not always write by Divine direction, but mingled his own judgment with the Lord's in his teaching.<sup>1</sup> This advice met the occasion ; and I do not believe that my adviser had any more thought than I myself had at the time, of its bearing on the subject of inspiration. Now began a peculiar trial to my feelings in the charge brought against me by some of my friends, that I was fickle, did not know what I believed, &c. They had been glad enough to see me interested in religious inquiries as long as it seemed likely that I should settle beside them in my conclusions. No doubt it would have suited them better if I had not been an *inquirer* at all, but had taken my religion blindly, as they had theirs, without any tiresome and dangerous inspection of the grounds on which it rested : still, as boys generally do not take a very lively interest in religion, they had been glad to see my eyes sparkling in that direction, and had been willing I should read a little one-sided controversy and ask a few questions, expecting to see me presently lie down under the horns of the altar in all Christian docility and peace. That I did not do so, but persisted, like

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. vii. 6, 10, 12, 25, 26, 40; II Cor. viii. 8, 10.

the troublesome fellow in Dickens's novel, "wanting to know," sadly displeased them with me, and changed their encouraging sympathy into the reproach which I have said was a peculiar trial and was very hard to bear. I do not know that I was fickle; but I do know that I was very much in earnest, and that these people who taunted me with not knowing what I believed never had clearly known what they believed themselves. Their steadfastness was willing stagnation of mind; and my changing was the natural current of healthful activity in a mind that could not prefer a still pool to the living waters of truth beyond. When I saw Mr. W—— again, my dissatisfaction with Episcopalianism was such as to disgust that gentleman with so unmanageable a catechumen; and though we remained on amicable terms, he troubled me no more about confirmation, nor I him to help me in my search for the true Church; which thenceforth showed itself more and more of an *ignis fatuus* in the tenebrous atmosphere of Protestant variations. If I did not follow the course of Moore's "Irish Gentleman in search of a religion," it was because a simpler path lay before me, which led, however, to the Irish Gentleman's bourn all the same. The Whittingham-Johns imbroglio presented the Episcopal Church in the light of a house divided against itself. Presby-

terianism, though strong enough to draw the battle at least with prelacy, and though very orderly and respectable in its organisation and membership, had not sufficient attraction to win me to its side. Its hard commercial way of dealing with the Almighty, its lack of warmth of colouring to my imagination, and the meagreness of its apostolic argument, turned me away. The Baptists were in like manner repulsive to me, notwithstanding the antiquity of their distinctive rite. The Methodists, and all the Evangelical tribe besides that I have not mentioned, seemed but mongrel offshoots or imitations of the greater bodies that I had already weighed in the balance and found wanting. All life and consciousness appeared to protest against Quakers and the like. The Liberal sects were virtually unknown to me. I am inclined to think that Unitarianism, that least unreasonable form of Christianity, might have given me pause and temporary rest if I had been acquainted with it at this time, when I had grown so weary and desponding in my quest of the true Church, which was the proper sequel of the supernatural ministry of Jesus, but against which the gates of hell seemed to have prevailed so effectually as to have trampled out all trace of its foundations and authority. But I did not know Unitarianism, save as a name, or as a monstrous heresy which it was something like sin to



think of as a Christian claimant. The Roman Catholic Church was another monster, too horrible and too absurd to call for patient consideration. There was no true Church, God's own, made and sent by Him, and having therefore a divine claim to my allegiance. Then was Christianity not what I had believed: yet my early education constrained me to cherish the thought that it must have the soul of goodness in it somehow, and that I ought to squeeze myself into it somewhere, for my own sake, if not for the sake of God, who really seemed to be very indifferent to the result. So I went on, feeling the pangs of famine while all were feeding around me. I read *Duncan's Lectures*, remarkable as the wasteful endeavour of a powerful mind to deduce a scheme of Moral Government from the first chapters of Genesis. This book served to unsettle my faith in the doctrine of the Trinity, which as a child I might be excused for having before that time held undoubtingly. The discovery which I made about the same time, that that ancient symbol known as the Apostles' Creed is susceptible of a Unitarian interpretation, is also to be noted, as having tended to smooth the wrinkled front of heterodoxy to my young eyes. I have not spoken of the prayers with which I accompanied my unsuccessful search; but have only recorded the workings of my mind through



its "phases of faith" up to this period. Of course I prayed, as well as searched the Scriptures, in my travail; the one to as little purpose as the other, so far as the immediate pressing object was concerned. Prayer, when it is the outcry of the labouring spirit, always brings a measure of relief, and sometimes, under the laws of nature, opens a way to the very thing prayed for, though commonly the suppliant has to put up with something else. Searching the Scriptures is much less efficacious, without a strong fanatical fervour in him that makes the search. Be thoroughly persuaded that such-and-such a doctrine is contained in the Bible, and you will very likely find it there, and in passages whose authors were the farthest possible removed from the doctrine: but go in a spirit of candid inquiry to this oracle of contradictions, and the more you search the more confused and hopeless you become. This must needs be so, for the Bible is made up of the ill-matched compositions of many disagreeing writers, who wrote for times and places, as well as for mental and moral habitudes, very remote from these of ours; and as to the question of the Church in the nineteenth century, it is especially at fault, from the notorious fact that the primitive Christians expected the Last Judgment and the consummation of all things to come in their own mortal day and generation.

A year or more passed over my head. One day, I was having a controversial talk with a friend, in which the point of Christian union came up. Provoked by some now forgotten remark of the other party, I said,—“Go to the Church of Rome, if you want unity and consistency!” It was a hasty and sarcastic speech; but the moment it was uttered, my heart burned within me, and my words, lost upon my companion, sounded back to the inner ear of my consciousness like the voice that came to Peter as he slumbered on the house-top. What if I had been in blindness all this time about the Church of Rome, and instead of a monster of corruption, it was God’s clean and perfect tabernacle, the Church I had sought, and sighed for, and despaired of at last? Might it not be so? At least I was bound to inquire further. I did inquire; all by myself at first, with only a few expository works on the Catholic faith to help me; later with the aid of some personal friends who were Catholics. Before I applied to the latter, however, I believe I had pretty well satisfied myself from my own reading and thinking that I was obliged to be a Catholic; and what I wanted was to feel fresh Christian sympathy again, and to be introduced to some one who could speak to me with an authority that had indeed descended from Christ and the Apostles. No more sham churches for me. I

had done with them, thank Heaven it was so !  
forever.

Looking back now, I can see no flaw in the argument that led me to the Catholic Church, assuming the premises, common to all supernaturalist Christians, with which I started. No doubt there was, as in all such cases, much besides logic and pure love of truth that influenced my conversion ; but the argument itself seems to me irrefragable. An oracular religion demands permanent infallibility, along with indisputable clearness and authority, in its oracle. These attributes it is obvious do not belong to Protestantism, taken as a whole or in any of its parts ; but on the contrary, the denial of them is fundamentally necessary to justify the Reformation, and is contained in the assertion of the Right of Private Judgment, the ultimate meaning of which is individuality, supremacy of the individual mind and conscience. The history of Protestantism does indeed show attempts to qualify the assertion of the Right, and to restrict its exercise by one or another kind of external authority ; as in the supplanting of Papal by Royal supremacy in England ; in the setting up of the Church of the early ages as a substitute for the Church of all ages ; in the every-day

domination of sects and teachers; and most strikingly, in investing the volume called the Bible with an idolatrous veneration and authority over the human mind. These attempts, however, have all proved as illusory in their results as in the inconsequent theories with which they started. Unless the Church be divinely and infallibly constituted, any claim by it to restrict private judgment by determining doctrine and ruling conscience is arrogant, and voidable on every ground that will sustain the Reformation. Thus High-church Protestantism fails through the insufficiency of the human authority that it would clothe with divine prerogatives; and the same argument, further applied, is not less conclusive against the Evangelical theory. The futility of claiming any kind of supernatural authority for an obscure and voiceless Book, whose contents are the stories and moralisings of antiquity, and whose vouchers are the opinions, the votes, and the passive consent, of confessedly fallible men, is as clear as that which attached to the system of the old heathen auguries, of which it was said that the meeting of two augurs was an occasion for laughter. Of course I do not mean to say that the whole dialectical aspect of the case was taken in by me at the age of fourteen or fifteen. What I do mean to say is, that the steadfast direction of my conscience and

intellect at that period in quest of the divine Oracle carried me inevitably out of Protestantism, which was proved to be destitute of the Oracle, having only a misleading name and dumb fetich in its place; and landed me as inevitably in Catholicism, where alone the order and facts are in apparent fulfilment of the Christian premises. The argument, which I had a pretty firm grasp of then, and which is as clear as lightning to me since, is, I repeat, without a flaw, once granted the premises from which it proceeds. Those premises necessitate in logic some such organisation as the Catholic Church. On the other hand, the Protestant principle issues in individual sovereignty; and in the presence of individual sovereignty there can be no supreme Teacher of an objective revelation. Dogmatic Protestantism is, therefore, an egregious failure. A living intelligible authority is necessary in the Teacher's place. This is supplied to Protestants, inconsistently with their avowed principle, by their clergy and elders; who themselves derive the doctrine they teach from tradition rather than from the Bible, though they often exercise a marvellous industry and ingenuity in torturing the sacred text to fit it to their tradition. Each sect or congregation keeps its bottled mixture of traditionalised-Bible-doctrine, which is given and taken in solemn doses

as the medicine of everlasting life. So it happens that the children of Episcopalians are usually Episcopalians, those of Presbyterians Presbyterians, &c. The Bible is the Protestant idol; but as with other idolatries, the idol's hierophants are the real teachers. In general, the disciple finds himself placed by nature and circumstances in some particular division, say the Episcopalian fold, or the Methodist fold; and he quietly takes for granted that the hierophants of that particular division are right, and swears by them with all docility. I was not able to do this, but by the constitution of my mind was obliged to recognise the force of objections. The conflict of equal authorities under the necessity of personal teaching, and this pressing question of the one essential religion, forced me to abandon the Protestant principle, as I did not then suspect the unsoundness of the oracular premises with which I found it in unnatural alliance. I had constantly admitted the authority of the Bible, but could get no clear light from it on the constitution and doctrines of the one true religion. Seeing the doctors in hopeless disagreement, and the Bible made to support the contradictory teachings of them all, I turned in my starvation away from the Protestant board, that was spread with stones instead of bread, and found saving hospitality in the grand old

household of faith that had succoured millions of wanderers before I came.

Let me here review the ground just gone over, and amplify some of the points I have stated. I started with Christian premises at thirteen. Following the traditional element, under the impulse of my religiosity, I was a Roman Catholic at fifteen. Looking back now that I have arrived at middle age, I see that I was right. The Christian premises really lead to the Roman Catholic conclusion. Such an institution as The Church, in the Roman Catholic sense, is necessary to the fulfilment of the idea of an Infallible Oracle on earth to instruct us in religion, and to furnish and apply at all times a supernatural rule to the conscience. With immature but not unpractised reasoning powers, and with a devoted earnestness that bore me over every impediment, I worked out the problem in about two years to a correct result from my original data. To the rationale of the process I invite the reader's attention in the following pages.

When I understood that a Revelation had been made by Jesus Christ, and had been transmitted through a succession of teachers from his time to ours, and when I perceived that the



Christian world was split up into many divisions that disputed among themselves as to what were the particulars of the Revelation, it was a natural and just inference of my mind that some one body of Christians was in possession of the truth on the subject, and, as a necessary consequence, that all the bodies that opposed this one were in error. In the same way, it was reasonable to expect to find the one true religion plainly distinguished from all its would-be rivals by the possession of certain indispensable characteristics which should be wanting to them. I started, it will be remembered, with Protestantism, with the common Christian premise of an Infallible Oracle, and with the resolve to find and embrace the one, true, attested form of Christianity. The result was inevitable; inevitable from the logic of the case, and from the character of my mind, which could not help seeing and obeying the logical necessity. That other minds, many of them better endowed and not less sincere than mine, have as earnestly examined the subject of religion and have come to conclusions very different from those which I have to record in my own case, I am perfectly well aware. The fact is one which, while it does not in any degree impair the proper force of right reasoning, has a high psychological value as testifying to the operation of other



elements of a very different order upon the course of ratiocination; which has to be pursued in every single case in connexion with all which the idiosyncrasy of the case includes in the law of its action.<sup>1</sup> It is my part here to trace the

<sup>1</sup> If we are to be deterred from asserting a well-considered conclusion of our own on this subject of religion by the circumstance that grave, learned, and good men deliberately reject this conclusion of ours and abide by the contrary of it, we shall indeed be the sport of the winds, without the possibility of any stable ground for our minds to rest on. The many upright and able men who conclude against Christianity will then, by the very fact of their so concluding, forbid us to be Christians; and if we confine the argument to the Christian world, it will debar us from every sect and opinion in turn, because of the weight of wisdom and excellence arrayed in opposition. A remembrance of the fallibility of the human mind, and of the influence of other elements besides pure truth and evidence in shaping and consolidating its conclusions, should reassure the most timid as to the safety of dissent when their own minds have a reason for it; and should teach the duty of independent thinking, of self-enlightenment and self-reliance; and of the essential mischief of surrendering either intellect or conscience into alien keeping. I need hardly point out how recreant to truth, and what a confusing of the issue, it is to make the appeal to prudence or to fear; and how it would put us at the mercy of every intolerant man or system, one after another, to be swayed by so unworthy and untenable a plea. The impossibility, as well as the absurdity, of believing to order, whether one's own order or another's, is clearly demonstrated in such a case as mine.

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effect of the argument in its gradual development on my own mind, which, though hampered and misled for so long a time by the figment of the Oracle, had in other respects less bias to be overcome by the force of reasoning than there has been in many other cases. It was simply *my* variety of human nature. The dialectical process must stand upon its own merits, apart from all subjective entanglements; and I do not believe that any one will be able to point out a really unsound link in the concatenation from premises to conclusion. To resume: I could find no firm basis for a Supernatural Revelation on Protestant principles. Protestantism is in its root and essence the uprising of the mind against external authority. On its religious side, it is the denial of the claim of any man or body of men to impose a religion upon others. Historical Protestantism takes its name from the protest of the Reformers in 1529 against a decree of the Diet of Spire. The same Reformers, however, had already taken ground against the teachings and authority of the Catholic Church, to which they had previously yielded obedience; and the word Protestantism has always since the epoch of the Reformation borne the current sense of opposition to Catholicism on the ground of the Right of Private Judgment as asserted by the sixteenth-century Re-

formers. This definition is narrowed by its last clause; but even so qualified is broader than the original signification of opposition to a decree of the Diet. In a third and much more philosophical sense than either of the two senses just noted, Protestantism is the exercise by the individual mind of its natural right to refuse the yoke of an external religious authority. Even this is not an exhaustive definition; for Protestantism, being the dynamic aspect of individualism, extends of course to other spheres besides the sphere of religion: but for the purposes of the present argument we need not go beyond the last definition. Protestantism, then, is the exercise of a natural right, what the Reformers three hundred and fifty years ago quite correctly called the Right of Private Judgment. They, indeed, or the principal men among them, affirmed the right in a very limited degree; restricting it to interpretation of the Bible, which, curiously enough, was one of the possessions of the Church, deriving its sanction from her authority, and so, of course, standing or falling with that authority in its character of a divine compilation. But whoever affirms a principle is logically committed to all the consequences of that principle, those that he does not see or declare as well as those that he does see and declare. Accordingly, the Reformers are

really responsible in logic for all that legitimately follows from the Right of Private Judgment. Now this Right, being a right, and especially a natural right, must have a positive foundation to rest on. Mere negation, such as denial of Roman Catholic authority, cannot be the foundation. Every negation implies a pre-existing affirmative principle to authorise it. He who rightly denies does so by virtue of some principle which justifies him in denying; and this underlying principle, whatever it is, is the fundamental ultimate principle in the case. If the Reformers had the right to seize and interpret the Bible for themselves, it must have been either an inherent right of their own or a right conferred on them by an external authority. Now as to external authority, since that of the Roman Catholic Church was against them and was denied by them, it seems manifest that there was none whatever which could and did confer the right in question on them. To say that the Bible considered as the word of God gave them the right, does not meet the difficulty; since it is plain that they must have possessed and exercised the right *before* they could avail themselves of the Bible in the premises. Clearly, then, the right was not conferred on them by an external authority. It only remains, therefore, to consider it as an inherent natural right; a right,

that is, pertaining to them as rational human beings. As such it must rest on an affirmative principle; and since it is internal, and since the natural rights of all men are equal, this affirmative principle can be nothing else in substance than that *every man is by nature the rightful judge for himself of every subject presented to his mind*. This of course involves the denial of the claim of any man or body of men to impose a religion upon others. But it is precisely this claim that we must admit if we accept the theory of an infallible Oracle external to the individual man, to impart the particulars of a Supernatural Revelation; for it is not pretended that there is any fresh oral communication between God and man at the present day. There is no immediate Revelation; but certain men claim to have one that is mediate; that has come through successive generations of other men. These men, then, referring for their authority to other antecedent men, are to supply us with the external Infallible Oracle if we are to have it at all. Catholics consistently plant themselves on this tradition; calling it infallible, and uninterrupted from Christ and his Apostles to the present day. Protestants inconsistently stand on it; admitting it to be fallible, except in the persons and writings of some of the very early Christians, and to have been obscured and corrupted

during many long ages by superstitious and designing men. Protestantism contradicts itself when it takes this ground; as I have endeavoured to show in the preceding argument. The Protestant cannot consistently admit the claim of any man or body of men to give a divine revelation. If I seem to some of my readers to be wrong in this assertion, they may at least credit my statement that it was impossible to me as a Protestant to admit the claim. I repeat, in conclusion, that I could find no firm basis for a Supernatural Revelation on Protestant principles. I had either to give up Revelation or to cease to be a Protestant. Protestantism had been put on its trial, and had turned out an impostor from the supernaturalist point of view. It was my destiny to learn the fallacy of Supernaturalism itself by following it now into its true development of the Papal system; which is its proper stronghold, and at the same time its predestined funeral pile.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The other historical revolts against the Papacy are, it is clear, as devoid of apostolicity as Luther's Reformation. The Papacy serves to cut them all off from Christ; for though it, as I of course admit, does not reach to him, yet it certainly stands between him and all later ecclesiastical pretenders. The Greek schism, for instance, which was not consummated till the eleventh century, can be no more authoritative than Protestantism, the new birth of the sixteenth: while the latter

Some may say here, that I was too much concerned about disputed doctrines; that I should have cared less for the outward form, and have sought rather the essentials of spiritual religion, in which all true Christians are united. But if any take this ground, they err in supposing it was possible for me to be indifferent to doctrines while I believed that Jesus Christ had given a doctrinal revelation, as I had always been told he had. How should I dare to say that Christ's doctrines were not among the "essentials" of the Christian religion? And what kind of fidelity to Christ, or what kind of conscientiousness, would it have argued, if I had sought ease for my mind in acceptance of the cut-and-dried tenets offered me, without trying with all my might to know if they were the doctrines of the Master, or departures from his teaching? How was I, a mortal in the flesh, to discern and avail myself of a purely spiritual Christianity? and how could I venture to say

enjoys the advantage of being professed by the most enlightened and progressive of the heretical adversaries of regular Christianity, and shows itself to contain in its core the true, living, developing principle of Free Thought and Science, the conquerors and saviours of the world.



that any were "true Christians" but such as held the very doctrines of Christ himself? I did not find any one content with spiritual religion without outward ordinances; and every system of outward ordinances I saw to be connected with specific doctrine; and unless one professed something of the kind he was under a reproach. This talk about spiritual religion, in depreciation of doctrine, comes with a very bad grace from Evangelical Christians, the people we generally hear it from; seeing how bitter they are against Unitarians and other heterodox persons, on the ground of *doctrine*; how earnestly they uphold the inspiration of the New-Testament writers who anathematise the professors of wrong doctrine and forbid Christians to render the commonest hospitality or speak a word of good-will to such;<sup>1</sup> and finally, how devout is their faith in the declaration that *he that believeth not* (in connexion with a specific outward rite) *shall be damned*.<sup>2</sup>

If Christianity was in its origin a true and divinely-given religion, it could not have been so vague as to be without an outward system of some kind. Either this system was divine and

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 8; II John 10, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xvi. 16.



perpetual, or it was not. I thought from some evidences in the Scriptures, as well as from the natural probability in the case, that it was of a divine and perpetual constitution, and so, moreover, I was instructed by my living counsellors to regard it. Without the outward system, indeed, I could not have laid hold of historical Christianity at all. Dr. John Henry Newman seems to state very well the relations of Scripture and history on this subject when he says,—“The Apostles refer to a large existing fact, their system—‘the whole counsel of God’: history informs us of a system, as far as we can tell, contemporaneous with and claiming to be theirs: what other claimant is there?” That inquiry is very forcible: *What other claimant is there?* It was necessary that there should be one legitimate claimant in the case, as I looked at it; and upon examination I could find actually no other pretender to unbroken continuity of system from the Apostles than the Roman Catholic Church. The Church of England, with whose pretensions my examination started, does indeed lay claim to apostolical descent, in one sense or another; but hardly to unbroken continuity of system. It is not denied, and it does not admit of denial, on the part of this church, that at the time of the Reformation the Church of England separated from the Roman Catholic system, of which

it had for ages been part and parcel, and which claims unbroken continuity from the Apostles, but which the Church of England declares to be a departure from the apostolical system. Now whether we admit the Roman Catholic claim, or the denial of it by the Church of England, it is clear that the latter is without the continuity in question. If the Roman Catholic claim be true, the Church of England lost the continuity by its act of separation at the Reformation. If on the other hand, the Church of England is right in its denial of the claim, then it follows that that Church had, along with the rest of Christian Europe, broken the continuity long before the Reformation, by partaking of the lapse from the system of the Apostles. By no track of fair reasoning can this conclusion be avoided. Even if we were to grant that at the Reformation the Church of England returned to the system of the Apostles, it would still remain clear that its continuity was broken. Unless it had once broken off, a return would be impossible. And then the break dispels the authoritative character of the Church. If she ever fell away from Christ and lost the spirit of truth, she is thenceforth no trustworthy guide, no authoritative interpreter such as I was looking for. My search was not for a goodly fellowship of believers, but for an authoritative Teacher, upheld by God's

own arm, informed by God's own spirit, so that she could never, from the apostles' time to ours, teach wrongly and falsify the word of Christ. I could not have enduring respect for a geographical and headless Catholicity, that was one thing in England, another in Russia, a third at Rome. Besides, the Anglo-Catholics were only a handful of students, not presuming to claim, and very clearly outside of the possibility of possessing, the attribute of present infallibility any more than their Low-church opponents. If I were to accept traditional teaching as my rule of faith, it ought surely to be by preference derived from a body of higher pretensions, whose separation from the Apostles was not so manifest, at any rate. And these Anglicans (as Dr. Newman has noted in one of his Essays) depended on what may be flatteringly called their very dubious orders for their Church; while apostolically, the legitimacy of the orders springs naturally from the constitution and authority of the Church. The Church, I argued, cannot be a national institution. *Super hanc petram* does not refer to England, nor even to Rome. The first centuries, if their teaching were perfectly accessible and clear, as it assuredly is not, would be no authority separated from succeeding Christianity "to the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.) How arbitrary to assign the first

three centuries as the period of God's flying visit to the Church! How fanciful the notion that doctrine was divinely watched over for three hundred years, and thenceforth abandoned to the vagaries and corruptions of men. Fathers and councils developed the doctrine in the first three centuries;<sup>1</sup> fathers and councils continued to develop it in the succeeding time: but the Holy Spirit, it would seem, was with the fathers and councils of the former period, and the spirit of error with those that followed. This is very different from the promise of Christ in the gospel; and such a modification of it to suit a modern case I could not accept or fail to see through. It was a continuous, unbroken, infallible Church that I sought for. Certainly there is no such institution on earth, as I found out afterwards; but certainly the Christian theory demands such an institution, and I was right to turn away from an insular church, "by law established," as not answering to the demand. I took the whole Bible language on the subject as divinely true; and finding the Church declared to be *the pillar and ground of the truth* (I Tim. iii. 15), *without spot or wrinkle, &c.* (Eph. v. 27); and that Christ had established

<sup>1</sup> The first General Council, so called, met in the fourth century—325; but this fact is not inconsistent with the statement in the text.

the Church and promised that the gates of hell should not prevail against it (Matt. xvi. 18), and that He would be with it *always, to the end of the world* (Matt. xxviii. 20); I could not believe in any society's being the true Church that had at any time lapsed from the high conditions predicated of the Spouse of Christ. Not only was there a relative probability for the infallible constitution of the Church, but there were intimations in the Scriptures besides of such a mode of divine operation. The Old Testament showed what we may call a *possession* of the prophets, so that they were obliged, by a power superseding their own wills, as in the case of Balaam,<sup>1</sup> to speak what was put into their mouths; and something of the kind was foretold of the Apostles in the New (Matt. x. 19, 20). The Jewish establishment also seemed endowed with a certain official infallibility or inspiration, from what was said of Caiaphas in John xi. 51; and the promise of the Teacher and Remembrancer and Spirit of Truth, to abide with the Church for-

<sup>1</sup> The story of Balaam, which has perhaps been spoilt on its way to us, is, it must be admitted, not perfectly clear on this point; but the prophet, if we are so to call him, would seem to have been at least as much under compulsion as the beast he rode. The painfully bungling beginning in Num. xxii. is followed by a smother continuation and ending in the next two chapters.

ever (John xiv. 16, 17, 26), seemed to be understood and acted on by the Apostles in the Catholic sense when they spoke in that assured tone of divine authority, *For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us* (Acts xv. 28), in the Council of Jerusalem. Now, indeed, applying my profane reason to the matter, I can readily admit the Protestant naturalising of those scriptures which once seemed to me so instinct with a supernatural character and meaning; but at that time I was no naturaliser: I was young, unseasoned, and full of faith; and the Catholic interpretation, so confirmatory of the expectations excited by the Christian theory, appeared to me most convincingly true. With a strong disposition to believe in Christianity, the general evidences of Christianity seem convincing; and so with a strong disposition to believe in the infallible Church. The one true Church that I felt the need of had to be infallible, in order that its truth as a fact in the supernatural order should be assured to me; and so the "proofs from holy writ" were very conclusive. The exclusiveness of the Catholic claim suited my ideal conception of God's Church; and I was prepared to be delighted with Milner's ingenious application of Solomon's judgment to the subject. Here, too, Scripture came in to fortify my prepossessions. The one faith and fold, the true vine, the woeful

fate of separated branches, continually saluted my eyes, not only in the polemic fourth gospel (which of course I supposed to be written by the Apostle John), but on page after page of the New Testament besides. I was never for a moment deceived into taking the Church for a liberal institution. As such, indeed, I could not have believed in it. It was because it was imperious, exclusive, uncompromising, anathematizing, that I recognised it as the body spoken of in Scripture and demanded by the Christian premises. The loose thinking of Protestants about the necessary marks of the Church, and the possibility of splints retaining their orthodoxy, was intolerable to me. Not less intolerable was, as soon as I became acquainted with it, the milk-and-water spirit displayed by many Catholics in humbling their religion before its enemies, by timid apology that sacrificed the truth, and by faint-heartedness and paltering with their duty in its visible practice. The Catholic who bent his knee in Protestant worship, or who equivocated about Exclusive Salvation, or placed the Papal prerogatives on the ground of human consent, made me ashamed for him and for the religion he misrepresented; and recalled the Laodicean message in Rev. iii. 15, 16. Without this discerning of spirits and this thorough-going method of dealing with pregnant principles, I



should either never have found my way into the Church, or never have found my way out of it afterwards.

Before proceeding further, I will remark that in my expository observations in previous and succeeding pages, I draw freely upon my recollection of both Protestant and Catholic authors who were my instructors in the past; and it may be that in some instances I have, though unintentionally, borrowed the very language which impressed itself upon my memory at a more plastic period than the present.

My first confessor was the Reverend Henry Benedict Coskery, Rector of the Baltimore Cathedral; at whose hands I received conditional baptism on the first day of November (All Saints'), 1843; I being then in my sixteenth year. My first communion soon followed; and a few months afterwards I was confirmed by Archbishop Eccleston. So my Catholic life began; a life in which my religious tendencies were fed and nourished, and allowed to expand in a congenial atmosphere of peace and devotion. I look back on it, and on the persons who helped me to walk by its means purely and faithfully along the strait



path through the critical period of my youth, not only without reproach, but with a loving tenderness and a gratitude that will not fail. I can never forget how, struggling with an orphan's grief, I found consolation on the breast of the undying Mother that remained to me in the Church. The fresh, buoyant feelings which inspired us in the morning of life we remember with an inexpressible yearning at a later period when they can never return; and I go back to those feelings now, in recalling the Catholic associations of my boyhood, when earth was so fair and full of promise, and heaven fairer still, as pictured and reflected in the religion of my choice. Others may have their hard tales to tell of this religion, which shielded and cherished me when I was very poor and weak and could find no other such friend; but my testimony shall and must be to its honour, or I should be the basest of ingrates and the most untruthful of witnesses as well. In the proper place I shall have enough to say against the logic of its doctrine; but in treating of the practical training it gave me at this early time when I came to it in such sore spiritual need, and of the intimate acquaintance into which I soon grew with the character of its ministry and offices, no language will do but that of thankfulness and praise. I might say of it, as a boy that I once knew said of his instructors :

that it taught me "all goodness." It inculcated an heroic virtue. I met with no gross scandals anywhere in connexion with it. If there were any disappointment about it, it was that so many Catholics seemed insensible to the high demands and daily inspirations of their religion. For me, it was a perpetual feast of the spirit, where "crude surfeit" was impossible, and though my long hunger was appeased, the zest of appetite never departed while faith remained to supply the assimilative principle. The needs of both heart and mind were supplied to me, for the time, in this wondrous Catholicism; which only they who are ignorant of it can regard as being in its worship and distinctive doctrines mere formalism and superstition. I studied the service of the altar, and imbibed Christian teaching under the symbolic forms of its vestments and ceremonies. Every robe of the sanctuary, each prescribed act of celebrant or assistant there, is significant of something in the Gospel, or of some ancient Christian habit, which was cherished by men of old, though it is repudiated by our modern sectaries, and stigmatised as "theatrical." The public rites of the Catholic worship are continual incentives to private devotion. So are distinctive Catholic doctrines which to Protestants seem worse than unmeaning. The doctrine of Purgatory quickened my charity, and was as a coal

from the altar, moving my lips in prayer. The Real Presence made the sacrament a communion indeed, and one of such love and fervour as I can never forget. No wonder Luther, with that deep craving heart of his, was unable to give up the doctrine ; so that his spite against popery went no farther in this direction than to substitute *con* for *trans*, and cling to the impanation of his God. No wonder High-church Protestants hanker after the doctrine to-day, and go out early in the morning with sweet spices, seeking the body of the Lord. I speak that I know, when I testify to the vast power of the sacramental system of the Catholic Church, and to the good effects which it so widely works among its disciples. It no doubt has its grave mischiefs and abuses also ; though on this score there has been a vast deal of rash judgment, as well as of false statement, on the part of anti-Catholics, fomented, unhappily, in many instances, by low-minded Catholics, seeking in this scandalous way to curry favour with the enemies of their religion. No doubt, too, that goodness is the most healthful and desirable which can stand alone and is bravely and really independent of all such things as ritual observances. When in the progress of the race a high and robust morality, informed by true scientific conceptions of nature in all its departments, shall reign over the earth, and

those subtle amalgams the religions of mankind shall have shed their last "perfume and suppli-  
ance" with their parting breath; when the mystic rite shall no longer sway the conscience,—when the great Pan is indeed dead,—then the magic of the "outward and visible sign" may have passed away also. But in the present order, which will endure some time yet, the votaries of dogmatic faith cannot dispense with Jacob's Ladder for their ascending and descending angels' use; and the Catholic Church is mightier than her rivals in proportion to the superior enginery of her sacramental system. Protestants are not thoroughly at home with the great ecclesiastical developments of Original Sin, the Trinity, the Incarnation and Atonement, the Eucharist; any more than they are with the old-world cathedrals and abbey remains which they have wrested from Catholic hands and turned from sanctuaries into shows. The "fundamental" tenets have a coherence and concurrence in the Catholic system which they do not at all display in their transplanted condition. The Catholic Eucharist is in close and effective relation to the central mystery of the Atonement. It is the great act of worship, the daily sacrifice on myriads of shining altars over the whole world, as well as the special feast and offering of the individual Christian, his inspiring food through life, the viaticum that ac-

companies and sustains him when he descends at last into the darkness of the grave. The Real Presence is the greatest quickener of piety in the refined and imaginative soul. The Incarnation has made nothing thenceforth impossible or foolish that faith can propose; and here the twinkling taper before the shrine shows that the Lord is really *in his holy temple*, waiting in bodily presence to receive the adoration and listen to the wants of high and low alike, through all the hours of the day. Having submitted to the authority of the Church, I made no more difficulty about one of its dogmas than about another; taking them all upon the same authority, without which the natural reason and instincts must condemn them all as foundationless conceits together. It is true that some of them soon grew to be peculiarly trying to my mind; but I perceived that the question was of accepting the one common foundation which, with the primal assumption that it involves, makes one dogma as much above the criticism of private judgment as another. What I may call the painful dogmas were not those which encounter the largest share of Protestant denunciation; and I will venture here the opinion, that it is an essentially superficial criticism which invokes the condemnation of reason in a special manner for such corruptions as all Protestants agree in rejecting. I shall re-

turn to this point hereafter ; repeating now that I accepted Catholic theology, not piecemeal, as an agglomeration of separately tested fragments, but in one body of doctrine, upon the one broad foundation which if authoritative for any dogma, is not less authoritative for every other in the same order of Supernatural Revelation. Transubstantiation, for instance, has precisely the same foundation that the Trinity has, that Incarnation has, that the monstrous Devil-doctrine has, which Evangelical Protestants deem so salutary and holy. Reason rejects all these doctrines; and the supposed divine Authority which beards reason, and in the case of customary people hushes it to sleep, sustains them all. This Authority is for Catholics, avowedly the Church; for Protestants, ecclesiastical education welding firm the fetters of traditional faith. When one has so effectually hushed his reason as to believe that a man like unto other men, walking, talking, eating, sleeping, handled, suffering, failing, despairing, giving up the ghost,—was the Supreme Being, the absolutely Uncaused and Eternal One,<sup>1</sup> there is thenceforth for that believer no

<sup>1</sup> Whatever fanciful metaphysics may still be indulged about two natures in Christ, probably none of my readers will revive the exploded heresy of two persons, or have any difficulty in seeing that the language I have used in the text is properly descriptive of the Orthodox



absurd or incredible doctrine whatever, provided only it lie within the pale of his own education and traditional sympathies. A believer in the Incarnation and proper Deity of Christ is estopped from pleading *reason* against Transubstantiation. As the gist of the horror in the doctrine of Exclusive Salvation lies in the conception of the Deity as the voluntary eternal Tormentor of His creatures, so the gist of the perversion in Transubstantiation lies in the anthropomorphism of dragging the Unknowable down to the sphere of sense. A God-man is as monstrous and irreverent a notion as God-bread.

Protestants, not feeling any tenderness for the doctrine of Transubstantiation, recognise the full force of the philosophical argument against it, and wonder that any can be blind to its monstrousness and impossibility; yet many of these same Protestants continue to profess the certainly not less monstrous and impossible tenet of the Resurrection of the Body, in which they have been educated; and seem quite unsuspecting that their eyes as really need purging as those of the Catholics. But it is not meet for a Christian to appeal to philosophy in a question of revelation; and *impossible* is no term for him to apply to a

Christian view of Him in whom *dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*.

doctrine. Philosophy is man's wisdom, in which Christian faith does not stand, but opposes to it the power of God (I Cor. ii. 5); and there is no impossibility to him that believeth (Mark ix. 23). Philosophy teaches that an interruption of the order of nature is impossible; but the Christian does not mind this when he comes to talk about his religion, but declares that the philosophical impossibility has repeatedly happened; and he finds no difficulty in it, because the Gospel, which is for him higher authority than philosophy, says that all things are possible with God (Matt. xix. 26; Mark x. 27, xiv. 36). The possibility of miracle once admitted, one miracle is as possible and as much above the criticism of philosophy as another; the only real question about any doctrinal miracle being, is it vouched for by the revealing authority in which we believe? If miracle may override the objections of philosophy in regard to the Resurrection of the Body, the Catholic is clearly at liberty to apply the same triumphant argument in support of Transubstantiation. In either case the thing is *possible* enough upon the condition predicated in Mark ix. 23,—*If thou canst believe*; and this condition depends upon something else than natural philosophy. On the basis of faith, strenuously asserted by Protestants as well as Catholics,—external authority conveying a superna-



tural revelation,—Transubstantiation is no more amenable to reason than any other doctrine. The only question is, is it revealed, vouched for by the preaccepted authority? It never was hard to me while I accepted the infallible Oracle. It does not now seem to me so glaringly absurd as the Resurrection of the Body;<sup>1</sup> and it is infinitely less repulsive than the heinous Orthodox blasphemy of Eternal Hell.

Not only was Transubstantiation inoffensive to me from the first, but, while it found an easy acceptance on the plane of faith, it was comforting in its influence, and also decidedly stimulating to both piety and conscientiousness. It made

<sup>1</sup> I speak of the common view of the Resurrection, in which most of us have been educated, which children are still made to imbibe in the nursery and the Sunday-school, and which the great body of Christians cherish all their lives. The few who seek to pare away the most offensive grossness of the view for themselves by adopting such amendments of the doctrine as may be found, for instance, in Mr. Maurice's Theological Essays (leaving no *re-surrection*, that is, rising *again* of what has been dead and buried, to be believed in at all), are at no pains to rebuke the popular superstition on this subject, though they are so very indignant about Transubstantiation: and no Orthodox Christian, at any rate, will question the reanimation of the identical Body which hung upon the Cross, and which was *the first fruits of them that slept*.

me love the church and the beautiful altar wherever I chanced to be. It drew me in spirit to such places when they were at a distance, and quickened prayer and meditation almost to ecstasy at times. And then—the preparation for communion! Only to a person of lively sensibilities, perhaps only to one who had at some time lived the life of faith, could I hope to convey an adequate conception of the spiritual conditions with which I made my fortnightly approach to the divine banquet. The Catholic is required to receive his Lord fasting, and to have cleansed his soul beforehand by searching self-examination, hearty contrition for his sins, humble and particular confession of them at the footstool of penance, together with a sincere resolve to lead, with God's help, a pure and holy life in the future; without which, he is instructed by his religion, the priestly absolution would avail him nothing, and the receiving of the Body and Blood would be an awful and a damning sacrilege. As a Catholic, I learned from the standards of my religion, from the harmonious voice of the whole church, sounding the diapason of many hundred years, that to approach the Eucharist demanded a sanctity which only the utmost devotion, crowned by divine grace, could lift me to or preserve in me. I strove, with many stumbles and falls, but with ever renewed

hope and effort, which were surely not without their fruits, to keep my soul in this state of grace. I frequented the sacraments, and made my preparation for confession and communion as if the moment for my dissolution had arrived, and the uncovered soul were about to stand at the bar of final judgment. At seventeen, this world had so small a place in my esteem, and I was so absorbed in the teachings of faith, that I might have been addressed in the language of the Epistle to the Colossians : *you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God*. I felt willing to die or to live, as it should please God ; and to take no thought for the morrow, but to leave all to Him. The natural effect of these dispositions and of the devout ordinances with which I was surrounded was to preserve me to a great extent from the corruption which spreads its deadly polluting slime over the pathway of sanguine youth. The sacraments, the sign of the cross, the communion of saints which was opened to me in devotional exercises, in ascetic writings, and in the confessional, all contributed to build up my soul in the resolve and practice of a virtuous life. I was conciliated rather than repelled by particular doctrines that Protestants cry out against most loudly. Without feeling any special attractiveness in the doctrine of Indulgences, I readily perceived that according to the definition

of the Church there is no license to sin in it, and that the power of granting indulgences is a Christ-like function, which the Church may naturally claim and exercise so that it shall be very serviceable to Christian people. The sweeping denunciation of Relics, by zealous Protestants, I saw to be inconsistent with a genuine faith in such narratives as those in II Kings xiii. 21, and Acts xix. 12, as well as with the instinctive promptings of the heart in all ages and conditions of men. The Invocation of Saints seemed in proper accord with an earnest belief in their beatified state and with the article of the Apostles' Creed in which they are mentioned. *How*, exactly, they could hear our prayers, was of no more importance than *how* they could know of the "one sinner that repenteth," over whose earthly act they rejoice so exceedingly.<sup>1</sup> We say "I pray you," every day, to our fellow-men here: surely we may say the same without idolatry to our friends in heaven. By such simple yet forcible considerations as these was the practice defended to my mind against the common objections. Indeed, the whole Catholic life was recommended to me from the beginning as being a daily realisation of the Scriptures and early Christian symbols, in relation to which I had

<sup>1</sup> Luke xv. 10.

found Protestantism so sadly out of joint: and in nothing was this fulfilment more powerfully felt than in the mystic tie which made a common family of all the children of God and heirs of salvation, in heaven, on earth, and in the patient middle state that most of all called for tender and continual remembrance. It was a tie that death had no power to sunder, but could only plat into a firmer fibre stretching across the gulf of time. It made a fellowship and intercourse of the redeemed; so that those on earth not only believed in the existence of their invisible brethren, but communicated with them, felt their companionship, and interchanged with them constant offices of service and affection. The supereminent rank accorded to the Virgin Mother, and the fervent trust and devotion with which she is regarded by all faithful Catholics, I soon perceived to flow naturally from the Nicene and Ephesian doctrine of Christ's divinity, from the seed sown by Paul's teaching of the unholiness of natural generation, and from the need of a ledge neither too high nor too low for the longing soul's reach and rest from the pains and perils of its body of death. The Divine Maternity is no more shocking than the Divine Sonship. Call it idolatry if you will: it is only as idolatry is inherent in all human worship that this deserves the name. F. W. Robertson says

well, that it is only a *human* God that man can worship; and it may be added, that we should be half orphans with only a *Father* in heaven. The tender and great-souled Theodore Parker used to pray to God as "Our Father and our Mother"; and who that conceives of the invisible Supreme as a loving Parent, but blends the feminine with the masculine ideal in the object of his adoration? The God that is angry and terrible is a man; but the loving, forgiving, compassionate God, who would fain gather us as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, this God who is nearer to us than the other, and at whose footstool we have learned to trust as well as to pray, is woman rather than man. We have an instinctive feeling that only in a mother's heart can love ineffable dwell; and until the love of God so fills us with its perfection as utterly to cast out fear, we labour with a sense of something wanting in the Divine Being. Readers who have partaken of the rich spiritual treasures in George Macdonald's novels cannot forget that touching description in *Robert Falconer* of the Presbyterian widow writhing over the thought of hell for her castaway son, and crying in the agony of her prayer:—"O Lord! I canna say thy will be done. But dinna lay 't to my chairge; for *gin ye was a mither yersel*', ye wadna pit him there." As the Son, the God of the Christian

multitude, is a softening and reduction, so to speak, of Deity, which thus becomes tangible and familiar to man, so the Mother is a further humanisation of Divine existence, and a definite realisation of the feminine principle already suggested by the Son. If Jesus brings us nearer to the Father, Mary brings us nearer to Jesus, from whom all her dignity and glory are derived; and I felt that my poor soul needed every link in the spiritual connexion. Nor could I rate as an ordinary human being her whom God had saluted by his Angel and overshadowed with his power, and whom, according to the very words of her own prophecy, I found all generations calling blessed (Luke i. 48). I had learned in my Protestant education that the briefest contact with the person of Jesus in a crowd had communicated virtue (Mark v. 29; Luke vi. 19, viii. 46); and could I now find difficulty in believing that she who had conceived and borne him, and pilloved him on her heart, who had directed his first footsteps, and who received his last sigh and remembrance from the Cross, had partaken in largest measure of that overflowing holiness which distilled on soul and body together at a touch? I had not been taught to believe in the efficacy of contact with a dead prophet's bones (II Kings xiii. 21), or with the hem of a garment (Luke viii. 44), or with miraculous handkerchiefs



and aprons (Acts xix. 12), and to call others infidels for not believing such things, to be staggered now when the Church gave a wider scope to the same teaching, and told me that *all* genuine relics and holy beings were to be regarded with faith and veneration, and that Mary in particular was "full of grace" and worthy to be honoured above every other creature. To discredit Mary was, I saw, to discredit the Incarnation, in which God had chosen her to play so exalted a part. She from whom it had pleased Him that His Son should be made (Gal. iv. 4) must have been peerless and immaculate to furnish the incorruptible humanity that was to triumph over death and the grave, and sit at the right hand of the Father on his throne. If the *prayer of a righteous man availeth much* (James v. 16), how effectual must not be the intercession of the Mother of the Lord, whose voice on earth had moved the yet unborn and been the signal of the Holy Ghost (Luke i. 41). That she had great favour and power in heaven was a probability corroborated by ages of devout faith and made certain by the solemn assurance of the Church. There was no repugnance to hold me back; and I found comfort in the dying Saviour's word, *Behold thy Mother.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John xix. 27.



Mr. Capes, in describing his Catholic experience, declares that to him "the act of confession was never anything but an unpleasant necessity." It was an unpleasant necessity to me too; but it was something else besides. *The forgiveness of sins* was as real to me as *the communion of saints*. I heartily believed in the doctrine, and recognised the tribunal of Penance as a well-fitting part of the machinery of a supernatural religion. Resorting to it was to Mr. Capes "like a small surgical operation"; and he avouches that the only comfort he derived from it was the sense of relief from a disagreeable duty each time that the task came to an end. One is truly to be pitied who has to go through such an ordeal without the compensating return which the hearty Catholic receives. In my case, the actual confessing to the priest, though certainly very trying, was less severe than the preparation for it. I so dreaded falling short of my duty in this preparation, and thus incurring the guilt of sacrilege in the sight of Heaven. To avoid this I wrestled in agony with my conscience before God. Deliberate blasphemy would have been as possible to me as a perfunctory confession. When the hours of prayer and self-searching were ended, the rest was comparatively easy. I

could almost forget that it was a man I told my sin to and made my judge. That man was in Christ's stead, and Christ was God. I believed fervently that He whose word could not fail had said, *Whose sins you remit, they are remitted*; and as I had not been able to put up with any *simulacrum* of God's Church among the sects, so no "general absolution" would do for me here, nor answer to the strong terms of the divine commission. I took true pains with my part of the transaction, and was repaid in feeling the significance and lasting authority of the gospel words brought home to me, as the precise undoubting *EGO TE absolvo* was murmured over my head. I know that not all Catholics get the same benefit from Confession. Mr. Capes is perhaps a not unfavourable instance of a large class who are unfitted by temperament to profit by the institution. The enforcement of the obligation by superiors, too, though from the Catholic point of view a seeming necessity, is often attended with miserable scandals. I remember hearing from one who had been educated at a Jesuit college, of the painful scenes he had witnessed there when boys, driven into the confessional at regular periods, would sometimes enter it with curses on their lips. After all, however, there is, I am sure, to the numerous body of willing and earnest penitents the world over,

great good, as well as great consolation, in the sacrament of Penance ; which pious souls that tremble to think they have forfeited their baptismal innocence prize and cling to as a "second plank after shipwreck." I am bound to acknowledge that the influence of the confessional was in my case salutary. It tempered and restrained the warmth of a youthful constitution ; it purged motives of their selfishness ; it inculcated modesty and self-denial ; it made sin daily more and more hateful to me, and virtue more and more amiable and attractive. It taught me to know myself ; it imparted a priceless lesson of self-examination. I can never forget the searching scrutiny with which I used to probe my heart for confession, how entirely that heart was laid bare before God and the priest, how quickened I was in faith, hope and charity afterwards. Protestants know little of the preparation which the devout and instructed Catholic goes through as the preliminary stage before kneeling at the tribunal of penance to obtain pardon for his sins. They—Protestants—commonly look upon the priest as a professional pardon-broker, and upon the seeker of absolution at his hands as one who goes with a light conscience to bargain for forgiveness. Now it is true that the whole doctrine of atonement and pardon through Jesus Christ, whether as held by Catholics or by Protestants,

is essentially mercenary and repugnant to the instinctive promptings of a healthy conscientiousness ; but it is also true, that the Catholic teaching and practice which grow out of and find a firm foundation in this doctrine are really very different from what Protestants to a great extent suppose and represent them to be. The Catholic Church teaches, not only in her larger symbols of faith, but in her minutest instructions to students in seminaries, and to children learning the catechism in her schools, as well as in her innumerable books of devotion in various languages, that no words of absolution pronounced by priest, bishop, or pope, can do away with the guilt or penalty of mortal sin without hearty contrition on the sinner's own part ; and that to make confession without such contrition, would be sacrilege, and would fearfully add to the guilt of the soul. This teaching has been so broadly and unceasingly inculcated by authority among Catholics that it must be accepted as the doctrine of the Church on the forgiveness of sin. I know that there have been subtle speculations among theologians as to the effect of a certain kind and degree of attrition, joined to the sacramental rite ; but all such things are "caviare to the general," and find no part in the communings of priest and penitent in the confessional. A more solid difficulty seems to me to lie in a consider-

ation of the possible perversions by individual priests in this secret tribunal. It is not to be questioned that such abuses may occur, nay, that they have occurred in many grievous instances, and that they probably do occur sometimes everywhere, and will from time to time occur as long as auricular confession is practised. Even assuming a sacred obligation for the practice, the liability here spoken of must be admitted. The Catholic will indeed argue, and plausibly enough upon the assumption of the embodied revelation of the Divine will, that the possible abuse of a rightful ordinance should not be pleaded against its use ; that the rightfulness of Confession is determined by the indefeasible witness of the Church ; and that since God has committed the forgiveness of sins to His apostolic ministry, we are not to pretend to be wiser than He in regard to the safety, nor independent of Him in regard to the obligation, of the institution. This argument cannot be invalidated while we admit the authority of the Church as witness and teacher ; but it is of course worth nothing when that authority is overthrown. Looking at Confession as a purely human institution, without any divine obligation whatever, the argument from its abuses becomes extremely formidable. That the danger lessens with the increase of general intelligence can hardly be questioned ; though

it can never quite pass away until hierocracy itself has given up the ghost. As Dean Milman remarks in one of his instructive and delightful essays,—“the age of the Confessional, of spiritual direction according to the sense which it bore during the Jesuit dominion over the human mind, is gone by.” (*Essay On the Relation of the Clergy to the People.*) But leaving the general aspects of the subject, and giving my own personal experience of the Confessional, I am under an obligation to testify that its effects were favourable to conscientiousness and virtue. Farther on I shall have to remark on the decatholicising effect of certain elements of devotion which came to me in this way ; but I have here to repeat my acknowledgment of indebtedness to the sacramental system of Catholicism, which is so little understood among Protestants in general ; and the averment of my belief in the great multitude of souls to which this system has been a true nursing-mother in goodness not less than in faith. Do I therefore propose to Protestants that they become Catholics and frequent the sacraments ? Nay, I cannot prescribe for the needs of their souls. I should be glad if any poor words of mine might bring Catholics and Protestants into better acquaintance and into gentler and kindlier relations than before ; but I desire to see no conversions from one to the other side.

An exchange of one dogmatic faith for another is seldom happy. For the rest, that is the best religion for one which fits one best. There is no universal religion. The notion that there is, has filled the earth with horrors and wailing until now. All organised religions are alike human growths from roots of error. \* To esteem one divine at the expense of the rest, is a poor partisan superstition. The religions which Christians call false are as really true and good for the people that hold them as Christianity is true and good for its disciples. If the good side of religion has been nobly exhibited by Christians, so has it been by heathen for even a longer period of time ; and alas for the lofty and exclusive pretensions of Christianity ! the earthliness of its nature has been abundantly demonstrated through the nineteen centuries of modern history in which the evil side of religion has been so painfully contrasted with the good. So of Catholicism and Protestantism, that divide the Christian ground with which we are most familiar. Each is hedged with such divinity in the eyes of its followers as to make the other seem a monster by comparison ; but in reality, each is good for some of the race and very ill adapted to other some. The impatience of either side at the continued existence and pertinacious claims of the other, belongs to the era of unripe thought,



which the mass of mankind have not got beyond yet, and in which the unphilosophical notion of a Supernatural Oracle still clogs the intellect and confuses the moral sense. This era is passing away, but it will not be unduly hurried; and while it lasts, the sensibly decaying order of supernaturalist faith must be recognised as having a necessary, and therefore in a certain sense a rightful, existence. In dealing with this order, one who sees beyond it should be careful not to undervalue its importance, not to brand it as an idle cumberer of the ground; but to regard it with strict justice and all fair allowance; giving due credit to its merits, nor setting down aught in malice against it. Especially should one who undertakes to declare his own experience of this order which he has been obliged to abandon, but to which so large a portion of mankind are still joined in conscience and affection, be candid and painstaking in his account. It has been my endeavour here to discharge this duty. I have preferred to risk the reproach of prolixity by line upon line of iteration, rather than incur the opposite danger of not saying enough to make my work clear and to the purpose. It has been my design from the first to make my subjective acquaintance with Christianity shed light upon the objective argument. I cannot as a sane man admit the claims of this religion now; but in my

boyhood and early youth it was, under the Catholic forms, largely adapted to my needs, and, as I see now, was a necessary stage in my mental and spiritual progress. As such, it was good, very good in its place; and I am trying to bear faithful testimony to the service it rendered me.

It was a high ideal that I had set before me, the Kingdom of God on earth. I had faithfully taken in the theory of a Divine Revelation, its corollary being the visible theocracy of the Church, the highest court of appeal in doctrinal and moral questions, the supreme spiritual Authority on earth, to which all other authority here below, including of course the public and the private conscience, the individual and the state, is necessarily subordinate and subject. It is easy, when one does not heartily accept the theory, or does not perfectly embrace the scope and logical requirements of it, to object to this consistent view of the Church that it is despotic. Certainly it is despotic; and if the Divine Word had been supernaturally uttered to man and embodied in an infallible Oracle for our guidance and rule through all generations, it would have to be despotic, and could not be anything else. The idea of our having any right to cavil at

what it pronounced, or to question its authority in any way when it asserted it over us, would be absurd.

Here, then, I had found the Church, apparently all, and more than all, I had expected to find it. I had hardly at first looked for so complete and absolute a spiritual guide; but as I went on I saw the necessity for it, and here it was. It was surely a sublime conception, this of the heavenly kingdom established upon the same soil with the kingdoms of this world, an ever-accessible tribunal to decide all questions brought before it according to the pure and impartial law of the Most High.<sup>1</sup> Here was the informer of consciences, the righter of wrongs, the absolver from sins, the preparer of the way of the Lord. The realisation of my early millennial dreams seemed brought about in this anticipation of Christ's visible reign on earth. In the person of his representative, he seemed, from Peter to Gregory XVI., to lead the procession of the Christian ages, giving a new light to history, a new voice to poetry, a new beauty and significance to the whole life of man.

<sup>1</sup> "What could be more glorious than the idea of the Successor of Christ ruling the rulers of the earth, and swaying them all by the law of God?" "The one sublime theory, the only sublime theory that mankind ever framed," &c.—*Charles Buxton*.

The Roman Catholic Church, viewed with the eye of enthusiasm and early faith, seems indeed the visible kingdom of God on earth. Her rule of spiritual perfection, illustrated by the splendid examples of the saints; that irresistible though armless might which the world's annals show her to have exercised through so many ages; the regular ranks of her hierarchy, crowned with the stupendous sovereignty of the Papal Vicegerent, in whom the Almighty himself seems to speak with one voice to all the faithful: these marks to the ardent neophyte betoken an order not to be confounded with that of this world, whose affairs are confused and passing, while the concerns of the Heavenly kingdom are divine and eternal.

I started with the consecration of my whole being to this ideal. It was glorious to feel myself belonging to the City of God, with privileges that dwarfed all citizenship besides. I had been a mourner in Zion for the heritage that I sought but could not find; and now a door had been opened to me of the Lord, and there had been given unto me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. The only thank-offering in my power was myself; my affections, my understanding, my will: could I hold back any part of the pitiful return? I had the promise of

treasure in heaven that faileth not; and where my treasure was there should my heart betimes be placed. Imagination, inflamed with pious ardour, grew romantic in visions of the Middle Ages, those Ages of Faith, so reviled of men, so blessed in the sight of Heaven; when Science was humble and leaned on Religion; when war, and knighthood, and perilous love itself, were sanctified with the cross and made instruments of salvation; when men really believed in the Devil; when the sin of false doctrine was always recognised and reprobated, as if the faithful Apostle<sup>1</sup> were still alive: the glorious Ages that were past, but that would come again when the earth should be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. I cherished a contempt for the expedients of human living, that so often grow dear to the heart and endanger salvation. I destroyed my books like the early Christian converts:<sup>2</sup> a number of volumes did I mutilate because of the anticatholic character of their contents. I formed myself upon the models supplied by the saints and ascetic writers. Rodriguez, A-Kempis, St. Francis of Sales, and like fervid counsellors, were my constant reading; and, with frequent confession and communion, edifying intercourse with fellow-

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 8, 9; II John 10, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xix. 19.

devotees, and daily resort to the ever-open shrines for prayer and meditation, nourished unceasingly the flame of faith and zeal in my breast. I made a point of being thoroughly instructed in my religion, and eagerly greeted everything, spoken or written, that advanced this object. Of course I read stout old Bishop Milner, whose *End of Controversy* and *Letters to a Prebendary* are specimens of most ingenious pleading in clear and nervous English. A volume of very clever and scholarly *Tracts*, by Dr. Lingard, the historian, I estimated highly. Möhler's *Symbolism* was exceedingly serviceable. Audin's *Luther*, Spalding's *Review of D'Aubigné*, Kenrick on *Baptism* and on *Justification*, Wiseman's *Eight Lectures on the Real Presence*, and the well-known *Amicable Discussion on the Church of England and the Reformation*, were some of the works that assisted me to a true understanding of the doctrines and claims of the religion I had embraced. But the author to whom above all others I was indebted for this kind of instruction, and to whose logical ability and boldness my lasting gratitude is due for light and development in both politics and religion, was Doctor Orestes A. Brownson; whose name is an honour to American letters, and whose vigorous and thorough mind, with his bold, clear style, and his fearless habit of turning a subject inside-out

and sending the light completely through it, made him a terror to friends and to enemies. To Dr. Brownson more than to any other one man, as the helper of my personal experience, it is due that I know the Catholic religion to its inmost core as I do. The materials of the argument had now been completely worked up, and had brought me to a definite, well understood, and fully accepted conclusion, the heads of which may be briefly stated. God is absolute. God's specially ordained supernatural order is the supreme order on earth. The Church is the embodiment and living representative of this order, and of God, its source. The living representative alone can define the limits of this order, in general and in particular. All practical affairs fall within the sphere of morals. The spiritual order is the monitor and tribunal of conscience, and final judge of all moral questions whatever on the face of the earth. In this domain, neither private man nor public authority may ever dispute its decree; since the human and subordinate cannot sit in judgment on the divine and supreme. Thus, not purely religious matters only, but questions of state, international questions, civil obligations, marriage relations, &c., are all subjects for cognisance by the Church. The Pope is the ever-present and ever-ready plenipotentiary organ of the Church. His authority over tem-



poral rulers and the public and private conscience of Christendom, indeed of the world, does not rest on any human *consensus*, but is inherent in the divine constitution of his office. The bishops, deriving their functions from the Pope, and being in full communion with him, govern the several parts of the Church as his officers and councillors. The priests are commissioned by the bishops: and all the faithful clergy are entitled to the reverence and obedience of the people. This is God's order; and man is bound by the most sacred duty to accept it and yield himself entirely to it, without regard to whether it works well or ill in the temporal concerns of this mortal life. The true destiny and only real interest of man is in the life to come. "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

There was open to me in that time of zealous youthful study the excellent library of my first director and now-lamented friend, the Very Reverend Henry Benedict Coskery, D.D.; who, having more than once, I believe, refused the episcopal dignity, died Vicar General of the archdiocese of Baltimore a few years ago. No words of mine can add to the honours of this

worthy prelate; but for my own sake, and for that sweet charity against which there is no law, I will not pass from the mention of him here without yielding the tribute to his memory which is due from one who knew him so intimately once and to whom he was so kind. Dr. Coskery was a man of solid learning, as of unaffected piety and goodness; an upright and a judicious administrator of his trusts; and, though not displaying the graces of oratory, a clear and an impressive teacher, as his surviving catechumens in and out of the church know. To me, he was a patient and an efficient instructor, a winning exemplar, a sympathising and never-to-be-forgotten friend. I deem myself fortunate to have had at that time so able and willing a guide.

I have stated that while I accepted without hesitation all the doctrines of my religion on the one common ground of faith in the testimony of the Infallible Witness, and had no more difficulty on this ground with one tenet than with another, there was nevertheless in my mind a certain painfulness about some points of faith which was not felt in regard to others. It has been noted also that Transubstantiation, Indulgences, Worship<sup>1</sup> of Saints and Relics, Power of the Keys,—

<sup>1</sup> This word may be misunderstood by some readers,

and I might have added other popular horrors of popery,—were not among the painful tenets. The Church's explanation on all these points seemed to me as reasonable as her authority was sufficient to accredit them apart from the explanation. As long as I really believed in the Catholic religion this was so. There were, however, other points which were painful to me from the first; points held sacred among Orthodox Protestants, but which there had not been time and opportunity for me to consider during my brief career as a Protestant inquirer; and which, adopted with the rest of the Catholic teaching, made themselves felt in a continual pricking of the moral sense now that my anxious quest for the true fold was ended and a period of tranquil meditation had set in. These points were as to the asserted relations between God and man, and the momentous question of Human Destiny. There was even then an involuntary resistance of my mind to that Orientalism which gives its complexion to all Christian theology; and which in enlightened Europe and free America, as well as in its native Asia, has bowed cowering humanity to the dust in adoration of the King that can

as well as the word *Indulgences* which precedes it. I will therefore explain that Worship of Saints and Relics does not mean Divine adoration; and that Indulgences are not permissions to commit sin.

do no wrong, whose blunders are inscrutable perfection, whose cruelties are holy from their source, whose will is superior to justice, whose creature subjects have no rights in his presence, but are made to be the playthings of his power and the victims of his glory or his rage. Out of this formative element of the old civilisation have grown, by a gradual process to be traced in ecclesiastical history, the figments of the distinctive characters and functions of the Father and the Son, Original Sin, the Atonement, Hell. These figments are not in accord with the genius of modern thought. It is the remark of an astute author of our day, that the age which has given birth to societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is essentially another era than that in which such horrible conceptions of the Deity and his sentient creation could be accepted with devout faith in every direction. Where formerly a few scattered thinkers grew into a perception of the irrationality of believing such things, it is now a characteristic of the general mind to break the leading-strings of the past and rise rapidly to that perception. This fact is very manifest in the utterances of the press, and in the common social intercourse of our day. It had begun to show itself at the time I am speaking of; but it is much more evident now than it was then. There was, as I have said, an innate repugnance

in my mind to the fundamental principles of Augustine's and Calvin's theology. It was the bald unrighteousness of the "scheme of salvation" that gave me pain. If I could have avoided seeing the injustice of the damnation imagined, I might perhaps have been able to shut my eyes to the defects and contradictions of the "salvation" proposed as its partial remedy: as it was, all this part of the church doctrine was painful to me, though, because it *was* church doctrine, I felt bound to receive it. The horrors of theology are brought to a focal point in the doctrine of Hell. This is generally among the earliest of the tenets of faith, if not the very first one, to be rejected when a mind once allows itself to reason freely on the subject of religion. I cannot say how long I had been a Catholic when the doctrine began to trouble me; but I think not many months. Of course I tried to smother my reluctance, and prayed against it as coming from the Evil One. Meeting by some accident with the published controversy between Ezra Styles Ely, Presbyterian, and Abel C. Thomas, Universalist, on the subject of Future Punishment, I could not resist the temptation to read the book, which was small and soon finished. This was the first presentment of any regular argument against the Orthodox Hell that I met with. Universalists, I will here remark, are very

strong on the moral side of their argument, but weak on the scriptural side, and fatally weak in the admission with which they used commonly to start, of the authority of the Bible to determine the question.

It was only by the most rigorous assertion of my will, aided by the ascetic resources familiar to devout Christians in such cases, that I succeeded in repressing for the time, and from time to time as they arose, the struggles of my mind on this troublesome subject. After a certain period, I found some relief and made a kind of compromise with my understanding, by avowing in conversation that I accepted the Hell doctrine implicitly on the authority of the Church; but was unable to see any other reason for believing it.<sup>1</sup> No better way than this, literal subterfuge

<sup>1</sup> A friend to whom I said this asked me if the doctrine were not taught in the Bible. I replied that I thought there were no passages of Scripture which, subjected to private judgment, necessarily taught it. The error of Universalists seems to be in insisting that what they call Universal Restoration is clearly deducible from the Scriptures. In truth, while one's interpretation of Bible texts is generally shaped by one's prepossessions in each particular case, an impartial inquirer can hardly fail to see that some parts of the Bible deny Immortality altogether, and other parts really convey the popular notion of Hell; leaving a few texts in both Testaments which are fairly susceptible of the Universalist construction.

as it was, seems to have been open to me then ; but the relief was only partial, the compromise by no means satisfactory : the disgrace of holding the foul libel on God and man burned in me like a cancer all the time. The doctrine of Purgatory, making a break in the broad diabolism of the "scheme," was some comfort ; but as this provides for only a small part of imperfect mankind, the fate of the remainder still left Christianity repugnant to my sense of justice, my reverence and love for the Supreme Being, and my human sympathies. The Catholic distinction between human merit, as entitling to a temporal reward, and supernatural merit by divine grace, entitling to an eternal recompense, was, like Purgatory, in some degree consoling. While availing myself to the utmost of all such modifications of the Catholic faith, I was never able to follow the example of many of my fellow-christians in blinding myself to the legitimate consequences of the doctrine I was obliged to receive. I saw with a cruel clearness that Protestants must be lost in the world to come, along with a vast proportion of Catholics : the former, for want of the true faith, which is before all things necessary to salvation,<sup>1</sup> as well as for those sins which it is so extremely hard to avoid commit-

<sup>1</sup> Athanasian Creed. Creed of Pope Pius IV.



ting even *in* the Church, and with all the spiritual helps which Catholics, and Catholics alone, can resort to;<sup>1</sup> the latter, because of the narrowness and difficulty of the way to heaven, and the fewness of the chosen and the saved.<sup>2</sup> I saw, and could not help despising, the absurdity of the plea of "invincible ignorance" for good men out of the Church, and of claiming this class as virtual Catholics. I saw that there can be no effectual goodness out of the Church, with its treasures of merits, its fountains of grace, its supernatural life (our sole deliverance from the curse and corruption that deprive us of heaven), its one true faith, without which it is impossible to please God,<sup>3</sup> and which unless a man doth keep entire and inviolate he shall without doubt perish everlastingly.<sup>4</sup> I saw that belief and definite profession are Christ's own terms for escaping damnation, faithfully repeated by the Church. I perceived that the Apostle but followed his Lord in classing heresies with the works of the flesh, of which they that are guilty cannot inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>5</sup> Helped by the reasonings of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 14; xix. 25. Luke xiii. 24; xviii. 26. St. Remigius, St. Alphonsus Liguori, &c., on this subject, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xi. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Athanasian Creed.

<sup>5</sup> Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. II Pet. ii. 1.

staunch Catholic theologians, I saw, as I could hardly have failed to see without such help, that if an apparently good man is a Protestant, it is an indication that God knows him to be unfit for the grace of the true faith, the muniment of salvation. I saw, in short, that if the Catholic religion be true, heresy is mortal sin, whatever virtues may to human eyes invest the heretic. But the gravamen of the difficulty was in the existence of Hell itself, as a place of endless torments for a portion of God's creatures. I could not help feeling, in spite of all the pious resistance of my will, that this is opposed to the conception of a perfectly holy Creator and Ruler of the Universe. Apart from the special sympathy we feel for friends and acquaintances, there is nothing more horrible in the damnation of one man or class of men than of another. The blot upon the character of the God of theology is not that he damns men for rejecting his revelation, but that he damns them at all. When we once take in the unspeakably horrible sense of damnation in the Christian teaching, the shock is, not that Protestants, idolators, and infidels are damned as such; but that sentient creatures of God, living, moving, and being in Him, and incapable of any act or thought without Him, are by His fiat consigned to such a fate when their fleeting span is ended here. While, then, the destiny of persons

out of the Church, including my own nearest and dearest relations, was to me a source of perpetual disquietude, the trouble lay deeper still, and, impinging as it did upon the whole theory of the Fall of man, the wrath of God, and the purchased and limited salvation through Christ, was beyond the reach of the conventional consolations in vogue among my fellow-christians. I think I should have been much comforted if I had met then, instead of many years later, with the view which so startled American Catholics when it was put forth with the freshness and sturdy eloquence which to the last distinguished the veteran editor of *Brownson's Review*,<sup>1</sup> that the eternity of the sensible torments of hell is not a part of the positive dogma of the Catholic Church. I confess that I had no knowledge or thought of such a view till it was broached by the Reviewer ten years after my emancipation and full deliverance from the gloom and horrors of the miscalled Gospel.

I remember reading Mr. Miles's tale *The Governess* with lively interest. The death of Jessie touched me; but I could not help making the reflection, that it was the *human* qualities and circumstances of the dear girl that made her

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Brownson died in April, 1876; having closed the Last Series of his matchless Review the preceding October.

an object of tender pity. She might have been a Protestant, and just as good and lovable. Catholic story-writers have in their religion a fine field for the exercise of their aesthetic imaginations. They find in the Church the same inspiration that the lover finds in his mistress; and their Catholic scenes are as glowing as the verse of Petrarch. But like the lover they dream and exaggerate and overlook much. Thus they draw touching pictures of life, make their heroes and heroines Catholics, place them in situations which enlist our sympathies in the highest degree in their behalf, and then claim for them *as Catholics*, the admiration and love which are due to them as human beings. Mr. Miles could use his pen as deftly as any in this strain. Jessie, a sweet young Catholic, dies; and we weep over the sharp trouble she had during her life, and her childlike innocence in death. We are transported by our feelings into the invisible world to which her spirit has flown, and seem to see her among the blessed angels, freed from pain forever. We remember Christ's words, Of such is the kingdom of heaven; and rejoice that she has come unto him at last, and found in his bosom a rest which the storms and troubles of earth have no power to invade. And then we think of the Church that prepared her for Christ and the angels by baptism and the spiritual sus-

tenance of holy things; that consoled her with counsel and promise under the trials of her young existence; that comforted her dying pillow with words of absolution and hope; and that did not forsake her in death, but followed her to the grave with blessing and to the bourn beyond with prayer. The contemplation of this devoted Mother washes our hearts with tenderness, and in the moistened soil an ardent faith takes root: we are Catholics, exulting in our religion, and feeling that it is indeed the way of life and the gate of heaven. Such is the intention of the Catholic artist in drawing these affecting pictures; but if he is logician as well as artist, he must perceive that as an argument for the truth of the Catholic religion, they will not bear the test of cool examination. In this light they are obviously unsound, for the simple reason, that they are as applicable to one form of faith and practice as another. Doubtless Catholicism excels in the extent and versatility of its spiritual forces. It unquestionably exceeds all other Christian bodies, as well in the vastness of its machinery, as in the skill and experience with which it makes use of its varied appliances. But though these advantages may give it a general superiority over Protestantism in the accessories of a moving tableau; yet as to the main centre and substance in a matter of this kind, the two stand

on common ground, and, the appeal to human sympathy once successfully made, Protestantism, being less exclusive than its rival, has less to fear from a reaction. I could not help the reflection that the character of Jessie was but a lively presentation of human innocence, grace and suffering; that these qualities are shared by Protestants and heathen equally with Catholics; that Grace Kennedy and other writers had portrayed similar scenes from a Protestant point of view, which had moved me not less than these from the Catholic pen of Mr. Miles. And then would follow the thought, absorbing all the poetry of the tale, and bringing the reaction I just now spoke of, that it was only for my fellow-members of the household of faith that my loving sympathies might flow unrestrained. Jessie the Catholic was pure and sweet in life and in death. She had lived by faith and partaken of the food of angels. Her remains breathed the odour of sanctity, and her Heavenly Father had crowned her soul above with the unfading garlands of eternity. But had Jessie not been a Catholic, she would have been only an unfortunate little girl, ill-fated alike for this world and the next. Had she been the child of Quaker parents and consequently unbaptised, she must have been banished forever from the presence of God and the society of the blessed above. Dy-

ing unregenerate, she could never have roamed hand in hand with the elect children through "the infinite meadows of heaven," but would have been favoured indeed, according to Catholic doctrine, if her doom had been no worse than eternal banishment from Paradise without the sensible torments of Hell. In the more fortunate condition of the offspring of paedobaptists, she might perhaps have been saved by water and the spirit; but this chance of salvation would have been very doubtful if she had died after ten or twelve a Protestant. *Out of the Church no Salvation* is positive Catholic doctrine; and the possibility of salvation in the case of a person who dies at years of responsibility without the Catholic faith is so extremely remote, and so against the inflexible deductions of reason from Catholic principles, that I can hardly conceive of a person who is at once of lively faith and acute vigorous intellect, as sincerely believing in it; though a multitude of Catholics, who would go mad if compelled to follow out the inexorable logic of the case, find comfort in the permission accorded them by the Church to hope and pray in private for their relations and friends who have died externs, and to trust that the plea of "invincible ignorance" is accepted by God in excuse for their failure to receive his true religion; and that notwithstanding the difficulty of



being saved *in* the Church, and with all the appliances which she provides for her faithful children, God will so far relax his law and order as to admit these outside wanderers into a participation of the ineffable joys prepared for his elect in heaven. This comfort, amounting often to confidence, I could only envy my fellow-Catholics. I could not avail myself of it like them. To me the horrible conviction would continually recur, that the souls of my dearest relations and friends were for heresy and unbelief crushed down under the curse of God and abandoned eternally to torments and despair. I vainly tried to exorcise and turn away from such dreadful images: they had the persistency of Banquo's ghost, and would not down. I could not bear to speak of these thoughts. Hid like devouring fires in my heart, they burned on.

There were two strong working sides to my mind at this time: the side of reverence and devotion, which contended for the faith; and the side of moral soundness and intellectual activity, which was undermining the faith all the time. The former, with all its power, was never able to command the latter—"Hitherto and no farther." Naturally conservative, I clung to "the fair humanities of old religion" as long as it was

possible to persuade myself that I was still a believer. Ah this *believing you believe!* How many mistake it for genuine faith, and go on all their lives hugging the delusion. And how many, too, even in this sceptical age, are totally unable to form any adequate conception of such a conflict as I am relating, and by their peculiar organisation and experience are *compelled* to misjudge a case like mine, so impossible to them, that they unconsciously apply to it the unjust weights and false balance which in the language of their own scripture are an abomination to the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

I had certainly taken up the cross in becoming a Christian. Self-denial and penance in their physical forms were not grievous to me. I could have gone on forever with such things, and never ceased to find the happiness of my first consecration to God and the faith in these modes of exercising repentance, humility, and grateful devotion. As long as my religion sanctified only really high or else indifferent things, and demanded but the sacrifice of fleshly inclinations,

<sup>1</sup> This thought has been very justly expressed by Professor Newman in the Preface to his *Phases of Faith*; which probably conveyed the first suggestion of it to my mind, many years ago.

both flesh and spirit were willing and strong to obey. I could give up the pride of life as well as its pleasures, and not only endure with patient submission the unavoidable afflictions that befell me, but embrace, in the spirit of penance, mortifications which I might have spared myself without sin. All this was easy to me for God's sake and in view of eternal life. But there was another requisition of religion with which it was neither easy nor possible for me to comply, though I struggled long, by means of my own will and of all the resources which religion afforded, to do so. I could not accept wrong for right at the dictate of another mind; could not, on any consideration, say that that was right which my own interior conviction, in spite of every opposing influence, persisted in pronouncing wrong. At first I did not perceive that religion demanded this of me. There was such fulness of joy in the first fruits of my Catholic conversion, that I saw nothing but the brightness of the sanctuary in which I worshipped. Then came the passing shadow, "a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand." But the brightness swallowed up the cloud; for I was young, and how can youth think of what is in a cloud, with the light of its ravishing vision all around? My dream was to last for years; but with each fresh year came more enlargement of a mind that

could continue its dreaming only until a certain point in its growth was reached. (I do not say, pious reader, that it was a *better* mind than yours: I say only that it was a *different* mind; and you perhaps are as glad of the difference as I am.) My study of history (by Catholic writers as well as others) compelled certain involuntary conclusions which were not consonant with the theory of the Church, nor with any theory which would save the Church or supernaturalism from condemnation. The same result followed from what I learned of both physical and moral science. It was not in my power to repudiate these conclusions at the bidding of any authority. I did not in any special matter decide that the Church was wrong; at least I made no conscious admission of it. The immediate working of the conclusions was not so much against particular doctrines of the Church as against the general *animus* of supernaturalist conceptions. "Providential" views of history, "design" views of creation, demonism and miracle views concerning man and nature, in short, the whole pseudo-philosophy of theological teaching, I was irresistibly coming to feel radically unsound, out of date, and sickening. The process I am describing was a renewing of my mind, a gradual progress out of its childish habitudes which had allowed of religious faith. It was an unpurposed

and uncontrollable mental sloughing, ordained by nature, and predestined to run its entire course in spite of any resistance that wish or will could offer. Will has indeed no more right of dominion over intellect than over conscience; and the profession of religion is maintained by a continued tyranny of the first over the other two. I tried the common way, but it was not in me to go on with it: the principle of it was no principle for me. My reason and conscience were never antagonistic, though reason and inclination, partiality, often were. Partiality might mislead conscience for a while; but it always had to loose its hold when reason spoke clearly against it. Reason's voice always commanded the ear of conscience; and what it uttered was thenceforth a part of conscience itself. To violate reason was to violate conscience: to slight reason was to slight and offend conscience. What was a difficulty to reason was a difficulty to conscience too; and conscience would not let me shut my eyes to such things and go on, would not let me run away from them to entrench myself in the citadel of faith, as religious counsellors advise. This kind of immorality was indeed scarcely open to me; for even the citadel of faith, as reason-proof as it is commonly found to be, was helplessly pervious to the spirit that wrestled with me night and day. Reason's light

had brought me to the point I had attained. I could not put out the light and relume it at pleasure, as many seem to think they can. The new habit of mind was surely fitting itself to me in place of the old. Anticatholic and antichristian facts and necessary deductions were constantly forcing themselves upon me. I found my thoughts taking shapes which have since been set forth with very curious felicitousness by Canon Pullen in a little book called *Christianity a Civilised Heathenism*. I began to feel that society and human life not only *were not*, but *could not* be, squared with the supernaturalist theory. It was hardly possible to avoid saying, with a shiver, that they *ought not* to be. The supernatural life was not led; the supernatural religion was not attested by its proper supernatural effects. More than this: the nature that we were endowed with led us away from that life, and inspired us with a sense of the impracticableness of that religion. Drawing its forces from another existence, and placing man's true destiny in that invisible and untried sphere, Religion necessarily depreciates this poor world where we are now in exile and probation; and enjoins the depreciation upon its disciples; who must, from the very beginning of their spiritual life in baptism, renounce the world and their own flesh, along with the Devil; and vow them-



selves to life-long warfare with the three, as enemies of God and their salvation. Salvation—in the technical sense—is man's only affair; and this is imperilled by caring for the things of earth and time. This teaching, which is so imperative from the supernaturalist point of view, lowers and weakens the practical side of life, as we plainly see in the examples of men and nations that have embraced it most heartily. Such examples, in which earth is sacrificed for the securing of heaven, are the triumph of religion and the mark of divine calling and election. Men who trample upon the interests and joys of time are the truly religious and predestinate ones. The genuine Christian has a contempt for the concerns of our mortal career. Science, art, the industries and refinements, the enjoyments and sweet affections of life lead away from the only good. The temporal depression of Catholic countries beside Protestant ones is an indication of the greater consistency of the Catholic religion. Protestantism stands for both worlds, and tries to make the most of the one it is in while it plans and prays for the other also. Catholicism shows us a more excellent way. Protestants have no holy virginity, nor vows, nor penance, nor miraculous altar; but enjoy the worldly advantages of power, prosperity, and ease, in a large degree. The Catholic, seeing this, says,



Let them have those things, which are no mark of the Divine favour. They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. This apostolic mode of judging<sup>1</sup> is consistent and consoling. The Spanish sovereigns who so cruelly and blindly drove out their Moorish and Jewish subjects, were consistent Christians. So was Louis XIV. a consistent Christian in banishing the Huguenots from France. So have all the crusading and dragooning of believing princes and people against useful and worthy infidels, in different climes and ages, been consistent with the principle that the true religion and the world to come are the only things worth caring for, or that we are at liberty to care for. Worldly prosperity is delusive and ensnaring. The people or the individual caring for it is turned away from God and salvation. "After such things do the Gentiles seek." Welcome maceration of flesh and spirit, welcome poverty and shame, welcome national inferiority and decay; for these show the following of Him whose kingdom and teaching are not of this world. I had learned this lesson well. What business of mine was it to labour for the food that perisheth? What had I to do with gainful occupations, or

<sup>1</sup> I John iv. 5, 6.

with merry-makings, or natural affections, or any other "things of the world" which I was forbidden to love, and which I had solemnly renounced to follow Christ and obtain heaven? I saw that hermits and cenobites and servants of the altar were in the likeliest way; but I was instructed that some Christians were called to live in the world; and that divine grace was sufficient for them in that vocation. But no Christian was to be *of* the world. I understood my duty of being *in* the world as if I were not *of* it; of being severed from worldly affinities, of practising intolerance for God's sake toward whatsoever and whosoever opposed the order of grace and the revealed doctrine. So, when I saw men despising human wisdom in their devotion to the teachings of faith, I perceived that they were supernaturally wise and right. But alas! I discerned not less clearly that they were naturally foolish and wrong. I saw how such courses affected society and the whole temporal order. I saw the kind of history they made, the present fruits they bore, and the philosophy of them. Well was it that their final supernatural consequences were to be so different; for on earth they were ruinous, and if the result were not to be reversed in heaven, strict Christians were indeed, as St. Paul said, *of all men most miserable*.<sup>1</sup> I saw

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. xv. 19.

that science accounted for miracles, that the progress of man exploded scriptural and ecclesiastical legends, and put the stamp of superstition upon the faith of earlier generations in such things ; and that to believe them now was puerile, while to reject them savoured of impiety still. It grew plainer and plainer that goodness was human and natural, and not bounded by creed limits ; that my conscience could not be safe and sound but in my own keeping. I saw too much ever to repose in Christianity again. Of course I ought to have put out the offending eyes of my mind, and plunged on to heaven's gate, eyeless, mindless, with nothing but my soul left, if so be God would only take that in. This was my Christian duty ; but somehow, grace failed me to perform it effectually. I only prayed, and struggled, and staggered under the weight of the cross.

My decatholicisation was a very gradual process indeed. Bit by bit, and without my knowing it, the supernatural fabric crumbled away. Point after point was established against it, in spite of my resistance and of my partiality for the failing cause. I would gladly have seen it prevail, but it had not virtue enough in itself to abide the test, and it was not possible for me to avoid ap-

plying the test, nor to be unmoved by the results. I was, as I may say, a reader and thinker by nature. The practice of my religion itself continually supplied material for scepticism (in the true and high sense of the word) to work on. The name and writings of St. Alphonsus Liguori stand very high in the Catholic Church, and the faithful are constantly exhorted to resort to them as a fountain of edification. Having gone to this source in all devotion, I presently became painfully aware that the great saint, however exalted his spirituality may have been, was grossly superstitious, and given to the peddling of puerilities which it is mental degradation to teach or to believe. I fairly broke down under the story of the "demon with a stick in his hand," who "appeared" to a young man that had neglected to bend his knee at the words *homo factus est* in the Creed, "and wounded him severely"; and that of the wicked man who was slain with an axe in the public square by a "frightful spectre" from hell.<sup>1</sup> And I knew that it was unchristian in me to turn away in disgust from these narratives instead of becoming as a little child and stultifying myself to believe them. Again: in

<sup>1</sup> St. Alphonsus Liguori *On the Sacraments and Commandments*: 4th ed. Boston: Thomas Sweeney, 1849. Pages 38 and 61.

the movements and changes which several years brought about, I had more than one confessor; and a certain Jesuit father who presided over my conscience for a time took occasion once to recommend to my perusal a little book containing a minute description of the pains of hell; which had an effect which must have been very different from that intended by my reverend director. This department of ascetic writing had for some time been known to me; but it belonged to my Catholic obedience to give special heed to the work commended to me by my confessor; and thus the dose had powerful effect, though not according to the prognosis of the spiritual physician. I had kept the faith hitherto by cherishing the gentler, better part of religion, and passively allowing the rest. Compelled now to dwell in detail upon the most horrible of all the Christian conceptions, I could no longer close my eyes to their monstrous unreasonableness. I thought of many persons whom I had known, and who, according to the doctrine that I was now required to chew and taste and swallow as daily bread, were undergoing unspeakable torments, such as Eastern tyrants, North-American Indians, and religious persecutors in every clime have delighted to inflict, and as humane and enlightened mankind turn away from with loathing and indignation in every

form save that in which theology has hallowed and handed them down from the cruel times of old. I knew that such a fate for my acquaintances could not be *just*; knew it as certainly as I knew that justice is eternally opposed to injustice, and that our moral instincts are not a mock and a delusion. And as to my own case, instead of being cast down by a sense of my sinfulness and deadly peril, under this dreadful teaching, I was moved by it to quite the opposite state of mind. I felt that, whatever my shortcomings and wrongdoing, I was not bad enough to be the companion of devils for one moment even, to say nothing of an incomputable eternity. I had often acknowledged most sincerely that I was not good enough for heaven: I should have been less honest if in this crisis I had refused to say that I was too good for hell. I never could make myself fit for either place. It may have been fanciful, but it was not revolting, to think that God would in his great power and love make me fit for heaven: could I, however, without blasphemy, suppose that he would—that anything could induce him to—exert his power to fit me for hell? The attempt to overpower my soul with a cowardly selfishness and terror was in itself—I do not speak now of the pious blunderer who made it with me—base, and foolish as base, for such a bubble argument cannot

bear the touch of cool sense for an instant. To bring forward distempered visions of the cloister as authentic accounts of the imagined Realm of Despair is of a piece with the whole character of the doctrine. The book recommended by my confessor did not promote piety, but it struck a great blow at faith. Nor was this effect lessened by St. Liguori's explanation of the precept of charity; in which he declares: "We cannot love the damned: we on the contrary are obliged to hate them as the eternal enemies of God." This religion of terror and hate was not for me. It is easy to understand how it nerved the arm of fiery persecution in a believing age, as well as what cruel perversions and mischiefs it may still work in individual cases where something like the faith of yore is yet able to flourish.

But are these silly fables and perverting counsels really matters of faith, so that one cannot reject them and be a good Catholic Christian still? That they have never been solemnly enjoined upon all the faithful by a General Council, or by the infallible Pontiff from his chair, may be true; though when one remembers that they have been constantly propounded and promulgated the world over by the most approved and honoured teachers, under sanction of the guardians of the faith, that they have never been censured by the central authority, and that they



have been most devoutly believed and acted on in those times and places in which the teachings of faith have had widest scope and dominion, it seems too much to affirm that they are not part and parcel of the doctrine of the Church. But let it be granted that they are not positive doctrine, that one may deny them without formal heresy. On this assumption I have still no hesitation in saying that a person cannot be a thoroughly good Catholic Christian and reject them. A thoroughly good Catholic must be imbued with the spirit of the Catholic religion, and must not sacrifice that spirit in any degree at any worldly or natural prompting whatever. That spirit is one of humility and submission, of self-abnegation, of the chastening of the pride of intellect and will by bending these faculties before superiors, especially before authorised teachers of religion. The more the natural mind relucts against such abjection, the greater the obligation to overcome nature and yield. The man who must go on watering the dry stick that it may miraculously flower, the monk whose son is scourged before his eyes to try his submission and renunciation of natural affection, the Jesuit who is trained to be *perinde ac cadaver*, "just like a corpse," in the hands of his superiors, are all true illustrations of the spirit of the Catholic religion; which would make each disciple war

against nature and self-will in himself by almost deifying those qualities in other men. The habit of mind which rejects such fables and conceits as I have mentioned is contrary to this spirit, and tends to heresy, though the rejection of any specific modern miracle or notion is not an act of formal heresy. He who rejects such things opposes himself in his pride of intellect and will to the current of Catholic belief and teaching from the earliest times. Of course a *thoroughly good Catholic* will not do this.

Devotional piety will go a great way; but unless it so saturates and possesses one as to render him a fanatic, he will have many cool moments in which his judgment will work according to its normal function. Woe to religion if in such moments the objects of faith and devotion are scanned with the bold clear eyesight used for other things. Viewed repeatedly in this way, the objects lose the glamour with which they at first beguiled the mind, and, not all at once, but by degrees, are retired below the surface, or else so positively rejected that their former place and power are lost to them forever. Quite commonly, people keep them apart, for a distinct kind of contemplation by themselves; but when they are looked at as other matters are,

the result is what I have said. I could no more help going on in an undercurrent of scepticism, getting continually stronger as it ran, than I could help drawing my breath. I did not understand the process then, nor suspect how it would end ; but from time to time I felt it to be uncanny in a Christian, and yet could no more help it, as I have said, than my breathing or the beating of my heart. It was only through the force of the enormous presumption raised in my mind on the side of the Church that I could bear up for years against the contradiction of its theory which history supplies. Then came natural and moral philosophy, and that spirit of the age which is born with us now, and all through life is entering to become part of us, with every breath and through every pore. The unappeasable contradiction of all these to the teaching and spirit of the faith made the gradual and sure revolution in my mind, without my knowing it till it was so effectually done that I could no more return to Christian belief than I could to the physiological conditions of my infancy. It would be impossible, I think, if it were desirable, to recount each step and stage of the course which led to this goal, or to analyse my mental and spiritual state when it was reached. The faith was always *one* to me. Though, as I have related, some parts of it affected my instincts very

differently from others, and though it is not to be doubted that the nature of those particular tenets had an important bearing on the result, and it may even be true to say in regard to them, that from the moment of their first clear presentment to my understanding, I did not really believe, but only tried to believe, and thought I was believing; yet it is certain that I never consciously rejected one of the doctrines to go on holding the rest. The foundation had been too well laid for such a paralogism as this would have involved to be possible. I rejected the faith as I had received it, in its totality, and as false in its very foundations. When I arrived at this consummation, the fabric that reason and conscience had besieged so long was indeed in a crumbling state and ready to fall; but I did not know it till the last, though each ringing blow in its reduction had sounded against my very heart. It toppled all at once, and I stepped forth from its ruins wounded and sore indeed, but rejoicing to be free. This deliverance came either in 1851 or early in the succeeding year. In the State Library, on a certain day, the conviction came to me that I was not, and never could be again, a Christian believer. For me, Christianity and Roman Catholicism are one and the same. In Catholicism I find the proper development and sole tolerable fulfilment of the

Christian idea. I do not say a perfect fulfilment; but the only plausible approach to a fulfilment that I can discern on earth. Protestantism is a wider and wider departure; and under its more religious forms is a weak metaphysics of Catholicism, utterly failing to satisfy after (as also in my case before) that, meshed in the prime fallacies and falsities proved against that, and quite unable to stand if that must fall. It is as the little sister spoken of in Solomon's Song: "*Soror nostra parva, et ubera non habet: quid faciemus sorori nostrae in die quando alloquenda est?*"

There often seem to be marvellous simplicity and inevitableness in results which after all had to be reached slowly, gradually, and by a roundabout process. I could not attain to the salvation of Free Thought till the principle of the old religions was for me completely exhausted. This was done in Christianity, of which Roman Catholicism is the regular development and culmination. Shallow Protestantism was quickly left behind. Catholicism held me for some years; and then, when the resistless tendencies of my mind, informed by increasing knowledge and experience, turned that inside out and compelled its abandonment, with it all Supernaturalism fell

off from me as a worn-out garment. Such is my mental framework that I could never blink a real argument, nor turn aside from any legitimate conclusion. A principle once adopted, I had to think it out to the last result, had to accept every jot and tittle of all that it involved;—or give it up, if it would not stand that crucial test of its soundness. In this way, Supernaturalism was demonstrated false by being worked out till it stood revealed in contradiction to indubitable truths in nature and experience. Then, going back with purged eyesight to the starting-point of my religious premises, I found that these had been assumed, not proved, and that, touched with Ithuriel's spear, they melted into thinnest air. I had assumed, or had accepted the assumption of others, that there is a Supernatural Revelation on earth from the Supreme Being, imparted through an infallible Oracle, for the instruction and salvation of mankind. Finding Protestantism unable to supply an adequate basis for this assumption and palpably destitute of oracular authority, I had taken leave of it like Æneas fleeing from Troy, not leaving my gods behind, but setting my face Romeward with fresh devotion and hope. Captivated by the more plausible pretensions of Catholicism, I had accepted its grounds, not indeed without examination, as at first with the Oracle, but after a very insufficient



scrutiny, with my mind already committed to the favourable conclusion. I had not investigated Catholicism in the independent light of reason. It was not to be expected of me at that immature period of life, and in the special circumstances. Hampered by the theory of the Oracle, I had compared Catholicism and Protestantism as rival claimants of oracular authority, and had been so carried away by the vast superiority of the former in this point of view, as virtually to forego further inquiry; and, while I thought myself still an investigator, had taken on faith what was at last as proofless and as opposed to the facts of the case as the claims of dogmatic Protestantism even. It is indeed a simpler task to expose the fallacy which grounds Revelation in human tradition, and claims supernatural authority for a confessedly fallible body of men, or for a selection of old writings the origins of which are with small exception unknown, and the exegesis of which is a matter of endless dispute, than it is to unravel the maze of moral and historical perversions with which the papal system clothes and defends itself to the sophistication of so many minds; yet the Church can no more than the Bible maintain itself in the last result; and the mind needs only to be completely unhooded to reach this result, and to see what wretched stairs of sand it



had mounted to get hold of a principle outside of nature.

I had yielded a passive consent to the claim that there is a supernatural Revelation, that Christianity is that Revelation, and that it was supernaturally given eighteen hundred years ago. Thus was Catholicism palmed upon me for the infallible truth of God ; for I saw that the claim involves certainty, permanency, and uninterruptedness ; which no other religious body than the Roman Catholic Church can supply. Of course, in a broad and fair view of the question, the validity of the Catholic claim does not follow from the failure of the claims of all the competing religions ; since there remains the alternative that there is no true claimant in the field ; in other words, that the supposed underlying fact of Revelation is not a real fact. But, as I have said, I had from the first assumed the Christian-Revelation premises ; and so for me, as the case stood, the failure of rival Christianity carried with it the proof of Catholicism. Accordingly, I accepted the papal system without requiring it to demonstrate its claims except as against the Christian claimants outside of it ; and not till I was clothed with the name and habitudes of a Catholic did I take up the argument for the di-

vine establishment of Christianity as an historical fact. Catholics and Protestants have a common starting-point in the beginning of that argument. Their starting-point is found in a cluster of assumptions : that there is a supreme supernatural Person ; that man needs a special supernatural revelation from Him ; that it is at the outset probable He has given such a revelation ; that miracles are provable, and that they demonstrate the divine character or commission of the miracle-worker. Having given themselves this start, they both undertake to show that Christ and his apostles wrought miracles and thus proved the divinity of their teaching, which we are consequently bound to receive. From this point of the argument, they diverge, and present conflicting statements as to the constitution of the Christian society and the particulars of the alleged divine teaching. Being in love with the Catholic Christian theory, and imbued with the doctrines and devotional feelings of the religion elaborated from it, I did not come to the "evidences" in any critical spirit, but went over them with the usual smoothness and docility of the Christian disciple whose mind is full of the already accepted conclusion. Only some time afterwards, when the philosophy of history forced itself upon me, and when by contact with real evidences, which did not find acceptance through

prejudice, but compelled my belief in despite of prejudice and by their own power of truth, the easy faith of the neophyte was staggered against his will, did I begin to have an uncomfortable sense of the naturalness (in opposition to supernaturalness) of Christian facts and phenomena, even the cardinal fact of the fondly conceived miraculous foundation. I had been told, by way of preliminary distinction, that the mind may properly judge of the evidence for the Divine establishment of the teaching authority, but not of the doctrine propounded by the authority. I learned by a slow-working but finally incontrovertible experience, which left no substance or life in the specious distinction forevermore, that the mind cannot help judging of all that is offered, doctrine itself, as well as authority for doctrine; and that no authority can authorise that which contradicts what the authority depends on for its own recognition. I learned further, upon a fair challenge of proofs, that the supposed authority utterly fails to establish itself as a divinely commissioned proposer of doctrine.

In regard to miracles, a subject hardly worth arguing nowadays,<sup>1</sup> but belonging to the course

<sup>1</sup> "Whether we attack them, or whether we defend them, does not much matter: the human mind, as its ex-

I am tracing: it was abundantly clear to me, that if a miracle were reported to-day as having happened a short time ago, we should—the wisest and most trustworthy among us certainly would—disbelieve it from the first, whatever the testimony; and if upon further consideration we saw reason to believe that the occurrence reported had actually taken place, we should still, and to the last, utterly disbelieve in the supernaturalness attributed to it. There are many sensible people who, for want of logical training, believe readily in marvels related of the past which they would at once see to be incredible if related of the present. Others, who do not believe such things without difficulty, yet constrain themselves to a kind of will-faith or profession on the subject, as a matter of moral obligation. A third class are endowed with such gift of mental deglutition that possible and impossible, past, present, and future, are all one to them, and they can believe anything. These three classes, with many subdivisions, furnish the believers in miracles. Other thinking people now, without waiting for a demonstration of the impossibility of miracle in the abstract, find the cumulative argument against all alleged miracles, or superna-

perience widens, is turning away from them." MATTHEW ARNOLD : *Literature and Dogma*, p. 125.

tural occurrences, absolutely irresistible. Detach the New-Testament miracles from their religious connexion, and every person of average intelligence and education sees that, as simple occurrences even, they are not at all worthy of belief; and, indeed, as depending solely upon the probably hearsay testimony of obscure witnesses of credulous minds in a credulous age, outside of the reach of cross-examination, and without anything satisfactory in the way of common authentication, they cannot for a moment sway the conviction of a rational mind that has not already admitted them upon other grounds than their proper evidence. Every system enjoys the prepossession of its own disciples in its favour; and thus the miracles of each religion are sufficiently attested for the disciples of that religion, who, however (at least among the enlightened races), at the same time reject as fabulous the miracles of other religions, though resting on evidence similar to that which seems to them so good to sustain their own. The kind of evidence which commands the Christian's faith in the case of Christian miracles will only excite his contempt if pleaded in behalf of Hindoo miracles. The Catholic can see no credibility in a Protestant miracle, nor the Protestant any in a Catholic miracle. The reason is not far to seek: the prepossession is absent, in the one case and in the

other ; that prepossession which is the real ground on which the miracle finds acceptance ; that prepossession which makes up for any defect in the evidence, which can dispense with evidence, and is satisfied with any that is offered on its own side ;—the side, and not the quality, determining the weight that is to be allowed to the proffered testimony. The spiritist, full of faith, and, as often happens, of a high degree of intelligence, is astonished and more than half indignant that the overwhelming evidence for the “manifestations” does not convince his incredulous neighbour ; while the latter is moved to disgust at the spectacle of one who yields his faith to things so intrinsically incredible. Take away the sacredness of the Scripture miracles, and there is no difficulty in seeing that the evidence adduced for them is ridiculously below what modern criticism demands to establish any extraordinary occurrence in the past. The evidence for some of the Catholic miracles in later times is decidedly superior to any that can be brought for the miracles related in the Bible ; yet Protestants, being in the most literal sense of the word prejudiced in favour of the Bible miracles and against the Catholic miracles, pronounce the former sufficiently vouched for, and laugh the latter to scorn ; though if miracles were proof of a divine commission, as Protestants themselves say, they



would be bound to examine the evidence for the Catholic miracles; and this they almost invariably disdain to do.

I saw, in short, that the presumption is always immensely against the truth of an asserted miracle; that this presumption can be overcome only by very clear proof; and that such proof does not exist, but is out of the question, in the case of the New-Testament miracles. I saw further, that there is an important difference between the reality of a fact and its nature; *i. e.*, its reality is one thing, its naturalness or supernaturalness is another thing. Unless we have either supernatural inspiration or a thorough acquaintance with all the possibilities of nature, we cannot know that an ascertained fact is supernatural.<sup>1</sup> If a man declared to me that he was inspired, I could not argue the matter with him: I could only say, that his inspiration, whatever it might be worth to him, was purely *his*, and

<sup>1</sup> See *Brownson's Review*, July, 1875, Art. V.; in which a cure through the prayer of a Mormon elder is admitted, but its miraculousness denied, with a remark confirmatory of what is said above about the possibilities of nature; and observe, that in the same article the Reviewer accepts as genuine the miracles wrought at the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes: and then, reader, remember what I have said about the *side*, and not the quality, of the miracle-evidence determining its acceptance or rejection.



availed me nothing. A thorough acquaintance with all the possibilities of nature no man can possess or pretend to. Not having this impossible comprehension of nature, and not being supernaturally inspired, I could not, then, assert of any proved fact (much less of something unproved) that it was supernatural. In regard to the miracles related in the Bible, the alleged facts in the first place are not proved; and the supernaturalness claimed for them would not follow if they were proved. Then, continuing to pursue the argument honestly and freely, I perceived that a genuine miracle would be no proof of the truth or trustworthiness of the miracle-worker. It would show him to be powerful, but it would be no demonstration that he was good and truthful. That God would not permit a miracle to be wrought by a false teacher is sheer assumption. We do not know what God would or would not permit. The assumption is, moreover, forbidden to supernaturalists by their doctrine of evil spirits with powers not limited by the laws of nature; and by the express words of their Scriptures in such passages as Ex. vii. 11, 12, 22. Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3, 5. Rev. xiii. 13, 14, 15; xvi. 14; xix. 20. (See on this point, Arnold of Rugby's *Life and Correspondence*, Letter to Dr. Hankin. See also Trench on the Miracles, Ch. iii.)

The patent miracle of the establishment of Christianity is as plain a natural fact as any other in history. "It may indeed be confidently asserted," says Mr. Lecky in his *History of Morals*, "that the conversion of the Roman Empire is so far from being of the nature of a miracle or suspension of the ordinary principles of human nature, that there is scarcely any other great movement on record in which the causes and effects so manifestly correspond." This is true ; and Mr. Lecky but expresses the common thought of students at the present day when he declares it. The old polytheism was dying out when Christianity came. The people had outgrown it in their minds and hearts to even a greater extent than we have outgrown Christianity to-day ; and the mixture of the various local forms of paganism had, at least in the great centres of intelligence, worked their mutual destruction, and left the craving for a new theory of life and religion, which Christianity by a natural evolution came forward to supply, with its appeal to the private conscience and its assertion of the divine dominion of one God, corresponding to the temporal dominion of one imperial ruler. The correlation of God and Cæsar was a very strong point. The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humanity, a revival of some of the most impressive pagan teachings, made

another strong point; blurred though both these elements were from the first by the narrowness and strivings of the early Christians. Then came Paul, with his hellenising manipulation of Christianity, and his magnetic powers of energy and persuasion. One may question if it be not according too small distinction to Paul to call him the second founder of Christianity. That religion as it has descended to us is much more strongly stamped by him than by any of the other apostles, or even by Jesus himself; who, in the highest view that can reasonably be taken of his character and work, was but an earnest Jewish reformer, one of many unsuccessful claimants of the messiahship; who died complaining that God had forsaken him, and left behind a "little flock" of disciples to form another feeble sect among the Jews. Paul renewed and energised under a distinctive form the nascent religion, separated it forever from Judaism, leavened it with Greek and Roman elements, informed it with his own fiery zeal, and gave his life at last to place it on the road to a royal destiny. Paul stands out on the canvas of history as a real personage. Jesus, if he was real, as may well be doubted, does not come down to us in his reality. The story of him is palpably mythological. The progress of Christianity has nothing supernatural about it, and is indeed a simpler and less

striking phenomenon than the wondrous triumph and spread of Mohammedanism, which in a century made its Arab disciples a united and resistless power : while the slenderness of the domain of Christian conquests, and the great preponderance of opposing beliefs, effectually negative the claim for Christianity that it is the absolutely true and universal religion. The plea sometimes made on behalf of Christianity, that it must be divine, because it could not otherwise have made its way in the world with its austere and self-denying doctrine and practice, is based upon unsound views as to both the laws of human nature and the special matter of fact involved. Enthusiasm and other motives often cause that to be accepted and practised which is in itself very trying to human feelings. If the prevalence of a religion of pain and mortification were necessarily a divine attestation, the Hindoo religion, so wide-spread and so full of cruel severities, would be more markedly divine than Christianity. But it is only the class of devotees that consistently illustrate this trait of a religious system. The first Christians were characteristically devotees, in constant expectation of the Lord in the clouds and the awful Judgment that was to follow his appearance. The great doctrine of original Christianity having been refuted by the event, and succeeding generations having lost the

daily stimulation it supplied, it has long been a very clear fact that the great body of Christians do not lead lives of self-denial and mortification, but seek and enjoy the comforts of luxurious living as naturally as any other people. Much more to the point than the Christian argument I have stated, is the sarcasm of Voltaire, that Christianity is undoubtedly divine, since so many centuries of imposture and superstition have failed to destroy it.

Having learned, with a lively surprise at first, that the living human organism occasionally develops wondrous properties of prescience and healing, yet to be fairly ranged in the categories of science, I should have had no lingering difficulty with the alleged cases of prophecy and restoration which believers refer to as miraculous, had the cases been better sustained by evidence than I found them to be ; but in truth, the prime Christian "miracles" are so poorly vouched for that there is no need of any more serious explanation for them than for other legends.

Catholicism and supernaturalist Protestantism are disposed of together when the alleged miraculous foundation of Christianity is exploded. Catholics hold up the Christian scriptures as historical documents, and argue from the statements in those scriptures that Christianity was given with miracles and the infallible Church estab-

lished by Jesus Christ. Protestants agree with Catholics in affirming the miraculousness of the Christian foundation, on the strength of the New-Testament writings; denying, however, the permanent infallible constitution of the Church. Unhappily for both these sanguine parties, the documents on which they rely lack that fulness of authentication which is necessary in any grave matter claiming to be historical. It is trifling with the intelligence of our age to claim authority for them on the uncritical testimony of the earliest Christian witnesses; who, besides being too late for the purpose for which they are cited, are so obviously credulous and fanciful on the subject, that one who consults them for himself soon sees that as evidential guides they are utterly untrustworthy. Christian-evidence writers do not usually let their docile disciples know what is the real character and value of the testimony they invoke so freely. The fathers, it is clear, were no literary critics, and the scriptures were handled very capriciously by them. They received what pleased them and rejected what displeased them. They made grave arguments for the four gospels from there being four winds, &c. If they testify to our present canon, so also do they to the Shepherd of Hermas, the Clementine Epistles, and other writings which Christians are now agreed in pronouncing spurious. No



one knows anything of the originals of the Bible: the putative copies are very doubtful in themselves, and doubly doubtful from the hands they have passed through; the translations in modern languages, which necessarily furnish the only Bible that Christians at large can turn to, are various, conflicting, and so palpably erroneous that new versions are continually called for. There is the greatest variety of opinion among students and learned critics as to the genuineness, right reading, &c., of the accepted gospels; and no satisfactory reason has ever yet been given why we should accord to the marvels related in those scriptures a credit which, following the rule of enlightened criticism, we constantly refuse to the similar narratives in other writings that have come down to us from the credulous past. The want of contemporary evidence in support of the gospels, as well as the self-convicting contradictions they contain, is fatal to their credit as historical narratives. To build so vast and weighty a structure of authoritative religion upon so slender and frail a foundation, is to doom the former to a crushing overthrow at last; and we see—when we dare, or are forced, to use our eyes—the shaking and preparation for the fall. Our church people of to-day, without giving up miracles, yet hold their religion upon very different grounds, and find it more and



more embarrassing to resort to the old method of proof. They silently feel the truth of Montaigne's remark, that belief in miracles is a measure of our ignorance. The very ignorant, credulous by nature and habit, accept such things without stint. Persons of cultivated intelligence are found to believe in certain miracles which partake of the credit of something else with which they are connected in the minds of the believers; who, however, continue to occupy the general ground of incredulity in regard to other miracles. The attempt to rest Revelation on sensible external prodigies indicates that there is no such thing. A genuine Divine Revelation would instantly ravish man's heart and understanding. It would strike him as immediately and as irresistibly as the lightning strikes. To talk of such a revelation's being a matter of argument and delay, of report and writing from one generation to another, subject to the casualties of all human tradition, is to forget the necessary order of correspondences, and to cut the *nexus* between the mind of man and its Creator.

It was clear to me in the end, that men never receive an historical religion upon historical grounds, and only in very rare instances take any pains with the historical argument before becoming believers. Mental habitudes, education, and social circumstances, in the main de-

termine one's religion. A person first gets his religion, and then perhaps looks at the "evidences"; his mind made up and turned away from anything that contradicts them. I may confidently appeal to the experience of my readers, Catholic and Protestant, for confirmation of this remark. That very earnest logician Dr. Brownson does indeed declare that "the question is one that meets the inquirer at the threshold"; and implies that he could not have accepted the Church "without meeting it, considering it at length, and disposing of it." The Doctor's stomach for evidence is much superior to anything of the kind among Protestants; for he finds that "Pius IX., the pontiff now gloriously reigning, is as easily and certainly proved to be the successor of Peter, as Ulysses S. Grant is proved to be the successor in the presidency of the United States of George Washington, the schism of Jefferson Davis to the contrary notwithstanding." (*Catholic World*, Nov. 1871, Art. I. *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1874, pp. 519, 525.)

The theory of Christianity is that of a supernatural religion. But I saw—it was burnt into me as I went along—that Christianity is as *natural* as any other religion or system whatever.

I saw it, always and everywhere, like the other systems, bearing fruits after its kind, the natural order. I had accepted it as a sublime theocracy upon earth, with a divinely constituted hierarchy, a visible head and ruler, representing God himself, rightfully dictating to the minds and consciences of men, and under the perpetual guidance of the Holy Spirit, who alone could know and impart the things that are of God.<sup>1</sup> This was the theory, an elevated, an inspiring theory, but, alas! one that was fatally contradicted by the facts of the case, as they were forced upon my attention. I found the Church not restrained by the Spirit of God from becoming a party, a contestant, an intriguer even, in the arena of earthly politics. I saw the Divine representative contending for prizes and power with mundane potentates. I saw the agencies of religion employed by the sacred order to gratify personal and partisan vengeance, to secure the objects of sensuality and godless ambition, and to put down what is now known to be the truth. I saw that the supposed divine powers were allowed to be passionately and violently exercised by the consecrated pontiffs, as human powers would naturally have been exercised by secular tyrants, at their own will and pleasure. I saw crimes and scandals of all sorts running riot in the Church,

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. ii. 11.

and reflected from the very seat of the apostolate. I saw that there was no Divine provision or interposition to prevent such things, but, as with other institutions, the course of *nature* always went on. I saw the necessary visible headship vacant or doubtful for years at a time. I could not agree with Catholic pleaders that, from the Catholic point of view, "it should be no matter of surprise that thirty instances of schism on occasions of papal elections are enumerated by church historians."<sup>1</sup> To an earnest-minded believer in the Catholic teaching of the institution of the papacy and the accompanying promise of Christ, it should be very grave matter of surprise; and the surprise grew into something like consternation as I contemplated the facts of the Great Schism which began towards the close of the fourteenth century and lasted nearly forty years; when faithful Christians, whether wise or simple, could not know which of the rival popes was entitled to their allegiance. Milner indeed says, in his *End of Controversy*, that the true Pope was always clearly discernible; but a study of the history of those times convinces me that he is wrong in the assertion. However settled the validity of the Urban line may be for Catholics *now*,

<sup>1</sup> *The Primacy of the Apostolic See Vindicated.* By Francis Patrick Kenrick, Bishop of Philadelphia. Third ed., p. 283.

it was very different in that unhappy period of Christendom's bewilderment, when, as Kenrick admits (*Primacy*, p. 285), it was "difficult for the most conscientious and enlightened men to pronounce with certainty who was the lawful occupant of the apostolic chair." The canonical question remains a puzzle to me still; and I never could conceive, as a Christian, how such an imbroglio in the Divine plan could have been possible. Selden profanely observes, that in the councils of the Church the odd man is the Holy Ghost; but it was not the odd man's vote that made Urban pope, but the more obviously unholy clamours of a Roman mob; and the violence which swayed the conclave in that doubtful election was itself the fruit of a complication apparently unlooked for by the Lord, which for a long time separated Peter's residence from Peter's see. The authority of the Council of Constance to do what it did was disputed at the time, and in view of decisions of the Church in our day is perhaps worse than questionable; though the submission of John XXII. (or XXIII., as some reckon) and the general acquiescence of the Church made it practically effective in disposing of the Great Schism; which, however, stands a monument in history of the folly of ascribing supernatural divinity to any institution among men.

It became impossible to believe that so foul a body as the *Ecclesia docens* sometimes showed itself to be could be inhabited by the Holy Spirit; impossible to think that God would not have secured it against such foulness if He had really ordained that it should be so inhabited. These impossibilities would have been rationally destructive of faith if the Church had not been convicted of error in her specific function of interpreter and teacher besides, as I presently found her to be: but this latter discovery, showing by particular instances that she was a blunderer *in esse*, and so precluding the further denial that she was a blunderer *in posse*, overturned her infallibility and set me free. No elaborate argument is needed on this point: the instances are numerous: here are two that occur to me. The Church has sanctioned bloody religious persecution. This involves a question of morals, on which, according to Catholic doctrine, the Church is infallible. Thus her infallibility is staked upon the rightness of religious persecution. The almost universal conscience of enlightened mankind pronounces against the Church on this point. It is in vain to deny that the Church has sanctioned persecution, even to the death of the contumacious heretic. True it is a maxim of the Church that she abhors bloodshed; and bloodshed is one of her canonical im-



pediments to the exercise of the priestly office. True the public execution of heretics is seen to be the immediate act of the civil authority and in accordance with the law of the land. But true also it is, that the Church is the mistress and interpreter of her maxims, and, being the supreme authority on earth, cannot be arraigned before any other tribunal here to be tried by any maxim; and that she can remove canonical impediments by her dispensing power and at her good pleasure. True also is it, that the Church inspires and approves the penal laws passed by the civil authorities against heretics; that she herself exercises the judicial office under those laws, decides upon the guilt of the heretic, and hands him over to the civil authority with assured knowledge and approval of his impending fate. It is a well-settled principle that what one does by another is done by one's self. The civil authority is in persecution only an instrument of the Church. The Church is the monitor of the State on all questions of morals. Undisputed facts show that the Church has sanctioned bloody religious persecution; and if this persecution is not merely politically inexpedient, but morally wrong, the sanction of it by the Church proves that she is not infallible.

The Church has certainly decreed against truth in science; and is not her word to be taken



when she says she is speaking in her province? One who heartily believes in her as a supernatural guide cannot refuse to take her word. If she does not know when and how to interfere as guardian of the faith, then is she not in truth the heavenly directed Spouse of Christ; and so the whole Catholic theory falls to the ground. Copernicus's book "On the Revolution of the Heavenly Bodies" was condemned by the Congregation of the Index as containing "false Pythagorean doctrine, utterly contrary to the Holy Scriptures"; and, the Pope approving, this condemnation becomes clearly enough the act of the Church, and as such ought to be accepted and defended by all true and hearty Catholics. Copernicus, it is well known, did not live to be personally handled along with his book. Galileo did. There has been much discussion about Galileo's condemnation. This settles down into clearness after it all: Galileo was condemned, and his true views were improbated by the Church. Let nobody be led away from the point by any cavilling about the kind or degree of the man's punishment. That is quite an insignificant matter now. The mistake of the infallible Church is the pregnant thing. The astronomer was condemned, his science was condemned, that science which is now assured to us as true. He and it were condemned by the

Church, and justly from the Christian point of view. The teaching of the earth's motion is contrary to the Scriptures; and if either the Church or Orthodox Protestantism were true, the condemnation of Copernicus and of Galileo would be right. But the Church, says the Catholic,—the Bible, says the Protestant,—was not sent to teach astronomy. Nay, the Church, my dear Catholic, on your principle, is commissioned *to say what Revelation forbids to be taught*, in astronomy or anything else; and so she has at least a negative voice in astronomy. And the Bible, my dear Protestant, if it be the Divine communication you say it is, cannot trip or blunder even incidentally. The Holy Spirit could not have made a mistake through inadvertence, in haste to get on to what was specially meant to be taught; could not have been betrayed into a false statement *of any kind* in its record through the ignorance of its human instrument. The moment you say this happened, you give up plenary inspiration, you give up the supernatural authority of the whole Bible, and leave it thenceforth a matter of conjecture when it is God's word and when man's. But, to continue the narrative of my own case,—the Protestant conceit of infallibility was never anything but ludicrous: my serious concern was with the Church's pretensions, and my predicament as a child of

the Church. The Church had certainly raised her voice against scientific truth ; and the private Christian is bound to *hear the Church* (Matt. xviii. 17), and to hearken to her voice as to the voice of God himself (Luke x. 16). That her voice in the particular case was now silenced by the spirit of the age, did not relieve me from the dilemma while I remained a Catholic. I knew that she had spoken, and what her decisions were. My explicit obligation was to her, not to the spirit of the age, which I had renounced with the world, the flesh, and the devil. I perceived that I was bound to believe the Pope when he pronounced upon the extent of his own prerogative ; and that in this way Christian faith and humility apparently required the sacrifice of civil obligations, the acceptance of contradictory propositions, and the rejection of the teachings of science. I saw that the Church, like other human organisations, often went astray ; that the Bible, like other human compositions, contained falsities and impurities as well as moral excellence and truth ; and that Christians were no more led by supernatural light than pagans and unbelievers. All this tended to show the Christian order natural, not supernatural ; human, not divine. And I saw that there has always been undeniable goodness outside of the supposed revealed religion. The supernatural

religion indeed ought to be illustrated by supernatural goodness, all-fair, all-convincing, divine. I sought this in the Church, and for a time deluded myself with the fancy that I had found it there. I clung to the heroism and consecration of the saints, and fondly said to myself that here were examples of more than human goodness, examples not to be paralleled outside of the City of God. But this fancy could live only in the air of the closet, and while the fumes of enthusiasm lasted in the brain. When I closed the *Acta Sanctorum* and rose from my knees, and looked abroad and around in the cool daylight of my sane senses, I saw that among the children of this world there was goodness not below the best that the saints had ever displayed; goodness right at my side, in heretical, and infidel, and atheistical shapes; goodness under all forms of intellectual truth and error, everywhere and always in the world: that goodness is an earthly product, not a heavenly graft or infusion; and that in the matter of asceticism, which I had mistaken for an expression of goodness, the heathen were not behind the Christian saints. I saw that goodness is essentially distinct from religion, is manifestly independent of Christianity, has been greatly injured, indeed, by Christianity, in some times and places, is hampered now by that religion, and is not in favour with

zealous Christians when it is not baptised with the Christian name. I saw, in fine, that Christianity involved, for me, the torture and surrender of conscience.

The Ultramontane claims, in which we have genuine developed Christianity, present an engaging picture of a theoretical Divine establishment ; but to assert them of the actual ecclesiastical order whose workings history exhibits to us so plainly, is too audacious, too extravagant, for patience and common sense to bear. The Gallican theory, so much relied on by "liberal Catholics" and their allies in this age and country of liberal politics, is mere shift and evasion. It does not fit the conception of infallible organic Christianity, and has ever been a desperate attempt to reconcile incompatibles. It answered its special purpose in French politics in the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries ; and it has served the turn of short-sighted or disingenuous pleaders repeatedly since ; but it is in its logical essence the denial and destruction of the ecclesiastical principle ; and its history shows how false and impossible supernaturalism is in relation to the things of earth and time.

The compelled exclusiveness of the Christian character, which, in view of the damning sin of heresy and the general unholiness of secular life, I had felt to be consistent and obligatory, and at

the same time unnatural and cruel and impracticable, was one of the final solvents of the bonds which held me to the faith. I could not be so sure of any existing evidence for Revelation as I was of the fact of honest intelligent doubt and disbelief of Revelation: and this fact was in vital contradiction to the claims of Revelation in the supernaturalist sense. The argument is indeed very simple, and it has had from the first the force of conviction to my mind. Supernaturalists are not logically wrong in proceeding from their postulate of Revelation to attach dishonesty and wickedness to unbelief; but the postulate itself is demonstrated false by the palpably false conclusion properly derived from it. Looked at in itself, it is seen to be unverifiable and weakly supported: looked at in its conclusions, common sense and common charity spontaneously condemn it. The theorem is still boldly upheld in the abstract; but its application in the concrete is now constantly evaded. The goodness of unbelievers upsets all church theories on the subject. When it is no longer practicable to punish heresy as a crime, men have practically abandoned the Orthodox theory of Revelation. Religious persecution belonged to the spirit of past ages, and has been gradually dying out as that spirit has been informed and changed; but it is the proper fruit and action of



the principle of theology and belief in a fixed infallible Revelation. Believers are now tolerant because the perfect, fervent, compelling faith of the past is no longer possible. They ought, logically, to persecute as fiercely as of yore; but, unconsciously moulded by the spirit of the age, it is no longer in them to do so. The leading races of mankind have now new intuitions and a higher law of life, at whose silent bidding they give up their theology in its spirit long before the fulness of time when they shall abandon it in the letter also.

So far from finding a miraculous origin for Christianity, I could not, confining myself to genuine grounds of history, so separate it from its Jewish connexions as to discern a precise beginning for it at all. If it was "founded" by Christ or anybody else, the act was done in a very dark corner, to which no ray of authentic history has ever penetrated. It is first seen emerging from the shadow of the synagogue, a reformed Judaism, gradually acquiring an independent shape and recognition of its own, and preparing, by an austere doctrine and practice which refused all compromise with existing paganism, to sow in the fields of martyrdom the seed of a splendid and perdurable destiny. Mar-



tyrdom, indeed, first gives Christianity historic definiteness; for it is not until the Neronian persecution in the year 64, that we find it growing into clear outline as something quite distinct from Judaism. The burning zeal of the Christian devotees, who expected a speedy coming of the great Judge and swift destruction of unbelievers, was a mighty instrument in the propagation of the new religion; which was further commended to the people of the Roman Empire by the need of something fresh and instinct with life to take the place of the effete and dying mythology derived from Greece. Christianity was an inevitable resultant, in due season, from mixed elements of thought and spirituality fused to a certain point. It was a timely evolution, and so responded to Roman religiosity as by sure degrees to leaven the mass, and to win a final triumph to which its ardent advocates of to-day yet point as miraculous. A similar phenomenon is witnessed in the wondrous success of a not unrelated religion, Mohammedanism, six centuries later; which to the Mohammedan believer doubtless seems as divine a miracle as the Christian reckons his.

How men behave in the straits to which the doctrine of miracles brings them! Mohammed, being asked for a miracle, pointed to the Koran as a standing miracle. Luther demanded mira-

cles of the sectaries to justify their separation from him ; forgetting that he had no miracles to justify *his* separation from the Church. Dr. Bushnell<sup>1</sup> admits the natural improbability of the gospel miracles ; but insists that the portraiture of Jesus is so divinely impressive as to make the marvels related of him credible ! It is stated, and I believe truly, that twenty years ago fifty millions of copies of the books of Noah Webster had been sold to all parts of the world. This would make a very pretty miracle, if Noah Webster instead of having invented a new language had only invented a new religion. Not that it would convince any but Websterites themselves ; but to them it would be of so stupendous a character as to fill them with a flaming indignation against the hardened infidels who refused to acknowledge its miraculousness and continued to regard Websterism as a human phenomenon.

Since I traced the argument for myself, I have read Archbishop Trench on the Miracles. The archbishop says, that “the purpose of the miracle being to confirm that which is good, so, upon the other hand, where the mind and conscience witness against the doctrine not all the miracles in the world have a right to demand submission to the word which they seal,” &c. : and “a miracle does not prove the truth of a doctrine or

<sup>1</sup> *Nature and the Supernatural*, Ch. x. p. 277.

the divine mission of him that brings it to pass.”<sup>1</sup>

Columbus may never be canonised ; but he seems to have appreciated the force of miraculous attestation when he brought an eclipse to bear upon the North-American Indians.

In reading over the preceding pages, I note a statement which perhaps requires some qualification. I have spoken of all supernaturalism's going from me with Catholicism. In the sense of a belief in supernatural revelation, the statement as to supernaturalism is correct. I had no affinity to any other religion left. There is, however, a remnant of supernaturalism outside of the religions, which in some cases is never put away by minds that have rejected the religions forever. I was not destined to retain even this remnant among my settled conclusions ; but it did survive Catholicism a few weeks, or perhaps months ; during which time I held to the mild theism set forth by the first Liberal writers that I consulted. I was disposed to believe in the religious sentiment asserted by Theodore Parker, and in the intuitions relied on for so much by Professor Newman. It required no long time, however, to enable me to perceive

<sup>1</sup> Trench on the Miracles, Am. ed., pp. 27, 28.

that either these gifted and good men were misled by the peculiar religiosity of their natures, or I laboured under a dulness of spiritual instinct which doomed me to fall short of the truth. I am satisfied now, that among real thinkers theism is a matter of temperament. The strong reasons which exist for refusing to ascribe this universe of good and evil to the plan and providence of a Benevolent Personal Creator are overborne in the minds of such men as I have mentioned by the ardour of their religious sensibilities ; which lead them to rehabilitate the hackney pleadings of the churches, that have been refuted a thousand times over, and that collapse indeed of their own emptiness as soon as the air which faith supplied is let out of them. Of course the minds of these temperamental theists are not satisfied with the pleadings themselves, with which they labour on so unnaturally and painfully, in such contrast to the vivacity and power of their argument against the churches : but their constitution binds them to the ungrateful task, till, forced at last to acknowledge the inadequacy of the objective materials for proof, they fall back upon a supposed interior sense of God and the divine relations of the soul, of Free Will, and of Immortality. Thus they ride down the resistance of their understandings, and raise their cherished doctrines to the rank of first principles, needing

no proof. Their intuitions are as unanswerable as the revelations privately vouchsafed to the Arabian prophet, or as the Holy Spirit abiding with the Church. With my different temperament the effect was different. My heart's desires were in harmony with theirs; but in my case desire was humble and waited on the judgment. My reverence, too, which made me a natural worshipper, rendered the theological conception of the universe intolerable to me. I was struck with the doubt intimated by Parker in one part of the *Discourse of Matters pertaining to Religion*, as to the propriety of ascribing personality to God. The effect thus produced on my mind was increased by the plain straightforward reflections of Miss Martineau and Mr. Atkinson in their *Letters on the Law of Man's Nature and Development*; and I soon perceived the inconsequence of rejecting Christianity on the ground of its disagreement with the facts of nature, and continuing to accept so palpable a contradiction as the common notion of Deity remains after all the refinements of it by our modern theists. These theists would preserve theology divested of its salient horrors under the old teaching. Their doctrine has not the repulsiveness of Evangelicalism, but it is open to the same three-fold radical objection: that it cannot maintain itself on the ground of common reason;

that it departs from the scientific method ; and that it needlessly introduces a demoralising element into man's conception of the universe. An eviscerated theology is theology still ; and all theology is babbling. Only by putting it all aside could I find peace and tranquillity in a reverent contemplation of existence. As long as one is haunted by the spirit of theology—and a great proportion of mankind are constitutionally hopeless of complete deliverance from it—one is driven to worry over insoluble problems, and to follow imaginations of deities and demons to help the cheat of knowing what can never be known. Somehow, I was not made to be a victim to this spirit. I was able to rest when I could go no farther, and was not tormented with any such necessity of searching into the unsearchable as is a standing attribute of the factitious sceptic drawn by religious writers ; nor could I discover in myself the “intuitions” insisted on by the Liberal Theists. The theory of the latter I saw to be at bottom that of the churches, from which I had recoiled with an immitigable disgust already. As soon as they set up a supreme Will as the Cause of causes, they suggest cruelty in the eternal constitution of things. Stop with the Universe, acknowledge *that* to be the Incomprehensible, and though you have Evil, you have not necessarily malignity or injustice on the part



of any greater being towards man ; who sees Nature to be without pity or remorse, but also without malevolence. Refuse to stop with the Universe, assert the intelligent design and power of a personal or *quasi* personal Will, making the Universe to be what it is, and you complicate and darken the problem in a fearful degree ; for whatever you *hope* the future may be, you *know* that the present has evil in it ; and thus the supreme Will, like the subordinate human will, works evil as well as good. If the existence of good in the Universe implies a Benevolent (*bene volens*) Creator, by the same rule, the existence of evil implies a Malevolent (*male volens*) Creator. The evil is not less certain than the good. No refining can do away with this fact. Your hope that evil will cease and good continue to exist seems without any foundation in reason. Why not good cease and unmixed evil remain ? You *wish* that this should not be, and you *think* that it ought not. But if your wish and opinion could prevail, there would be no evil now, would there ? Evidently your wish and opinion are not according to the "design" of the Universe. The existence of evil, which no sophistry can explain away, shows that evil is compatible with the nature of things. We cannot understand the nature of things, nor account for it in any possible way. To suppose a Theos does not



help the matter in the smallest degree, but makes it worse, and is besides utterly gratuitous. It follows, that theology, or the confident talk about Theos, is, as I have before said, babbling. The fancy that we have reached the Absolute in the notion of a bodiless Mind—as if our highest reach, if mind be that, must be Highest Being; as if anything that we can possibly reach *can* be the Highest!—afforded no point of rest for me. Church doctrine is only the extension and play of this fancy; which is to me untrue and shocking in its very essence. So, with all my spiritual sympathy with such men as Theodore Parker and F. W. Newman, I could not anchor my mind at last in their theistic doctrines, embracing an asserted Divine Person,<sup>1</sup> to be invoked by us; the sense of Individual Immortality; and Free Will as I understood them to hold it.

I will observe here of the doctrine of Indi-

<sup>1</sup> “Those who espouse this alternative position make the erroneous assumption that the choice is between personality and something below personality; whereas the choice is rather between personality and something higher. Is it not just possible that there is a mode of being as much transcending Intelligence and Will as these transcend mechanical motion?”—HERBERT SPENCER: *First Principles*, Am. ed., p. 109.

To turn away from the stony temples and petrified doctrines of supernaturalism, and read Bacon understandingly, and know Kant, and walk hand in hand with

vidual Immortality in particular, that it had not at any earlier stage of my inquiries been examined, nor, so far as I remember, called in question by me. The horrible form which it wears in the teachings of Evangelical theology had, indeed, long ago revolted me ; and in that shape it had been utterly rejected. I had, too, been accustomed to speculate on the surprise which the actual conditions of the "other world" would probably be to departed souls, after the deranged imaginations of it which had possessed them in this. The future life depicted and believed in among church people I had long viewed as an empty phantasm. That there is a future life for every member of the human family I had, however, continued to take for granted, my close attention never having been given to the point till the cognate tenet of a Supreme Personal Intelligence corresponding to man came at last in its turn to be scrutinised. Then I saw the almost necessary dependence of Immortality on Theism ; and that as man has out of the qualities of his own nature created for himself a God, so has he, out of the fears and desires of a yet unripe humanity, given birth to a visionary land of souls

Spencer, is like coming out of some Druidical grove of sacrifice into the pure air and lightsome day for which we were made.

with a satisfying perfection of good or evil which he sees to be impossible here.

I separated from the theists with regret, but with determination, and on the very threshold. I could not with them accept the foundations only to quarrel with the height of the superstructure afterwards. Free Will is in their eclectic faith what the Divine Glory is in Calvinism: the factitious *end* which by jesuitical<sup>1</sup> casuistry is to justify evil as the *means* of its attainment. They know free will, as stout Doctor Johnson knew it: they have a demonstrative consciousness of it. I am acquainted with a man who knows that the earth does not move. He has a demonstrative consciousness that it does not. In regard to free will, my consciousness points to a different conclusion from the theists'. So far from feeling myself an originating, creating, first-causing will-being, I feel and know just the contrary. The ability of the human mind to take

<sup>1</sup> I use this word in its current popular sense, without any grain of the popular notion in my mind that the maxim or practice it denotes is peculiar to the Jesuits. The eminent early Christian Eusebius was more jesuitical than Ignatius of Loyola. (For the approbation of deceit among the early Christian advocates, see *The Friend*, Essay V.)

cognisance of its own operations, though swelling the complexity of the problem, in no way alters its nature or removes it beyond the category of sensible causes and effects. I can agree with Dr. Carpenter in his *Mental Physiology*, that man "really does possess a self-determining power," "within certain limits," and is conscious of it: but this is not in the absolute sense free (that is, uncaused) will.

The Liberal Theists will not consent to be called by the name which their predecessors bore, but insist on a designation which shall include them with church Christians, in agreement with whom they hang the universe, with all its infinite complexity, upon a supernatural personal Will; an essentially theological conception, and one which, taking the plain facts of nature in view, is appalling. They assume, with the supernaturalists, a personal Deity, willing a vast system with pain and wrong among its constituent elements. They commonly assume, in like manner, with only the example of the supernaturalists to back them, an immortal destiny for each individual man. Then they assume an instinct of the truth of their assumptions: and finally, they imitate the very whine of the church people in speaking of the nobleness and importance of their notions, and the "blank" which nature and futurity must present to minds that

are not nourished upon their precious Extract of Christianity. I turned away from them, I say, upon the very threshold; and I have never felt the least throb of inclination to rejoin them since. The pet tenets which they are at such pains to preserve when throwing the rest overboard contain the very pith and marrow of theology. I cannot see why they should strain at miracles and devils while they continue so easily to swallow the deliberate acceptance of evil by the Supreme Being. If this dreadful doctrine be true, the other doctrines in natural association with it may be true also. I could not answer Butler's Analogy on their premises. Evidently, all that we know of nature goes against the theory of a just, discriminating Providential Mind as its source. And when the theist, having ventured an argument upon the face of nature, and having reached this point where nature so plainly testifies against him, falls back upon conjectures of another life where Justice shall rule as it manifestly does not here, he abandons the ground he has taken, and sets up an unverifiable hypothesis of a *reformed* Providence, which, however agreeable it may be to the fancy, has no support in sober reason. If the rule of Providence in the present life be one of injustice, there is no reason to believe that a future life under the same Providence will be differently ordered, so as to

be just and happy: and if the order of the present life be right, there can be no need of a future life as a scene of reparation. Our wish to be rid of what is bad and painful, and secured in what is good and pleasant, of course does not affect the argument. The existence of a wish does not imply that it will ever be gratified.

The theological and common view, which makes the reason for doing right the result of striking a commercial balance; and which is followed by theists in their close calculation of what the "sum of existence" may, despite of present wrong, turn out to be, is grievously low and immoral, it seems to me. Theists are essentially theological in their treatment of mind. While in one view they make it an impossible first cause of its own volitions, in another they insist, in contempt of the plainest facts, on regarding it as something outside of the apprehensible laws of nature, and as a subject of miracle rather than of science. This strikes me as intellectual vagrancy, a straying from knowledge in the opposite direction. I find it a violent transposition to consider matter as proceeding from mind. On the contrary, mind would seem to be the natural product of matter in some of its conditions. We find mind, like motion, heat, &c., the regular accompaniment of certain combinations of matter. It is apparently a proper phe-



nomenon of those conditions. We know of mindless matter ; but we do not know anywhere of matterless mind. Nothing seems to me clearer than the physical source of mental phenomena ; and I do not find mental phenomena more truly wonderful or ultimately inexplicable than heat, light, motion, odours ; nor, after what is now known of the transmutation of forces (or the varying phases of the one force) and of molecular oscillation in its bearing upon nervous perception, am I startled at thought's development from motion and sensation, more than at motion's becoming heat and heat motion. Everything that we learn on these subjects leads us away from supernaturalism. Mind is not more unaccountable, nor more suggestive of imperishableness, than the marvellous vitality of plant and flower and the teeming animal world. The relations of sun and earth furnish apparently a fully sufficient cause for the generation of life and intelligence in all their forms that are known to us. Life and death I see to be successive phases of incomprehensible substance ; of which all special existences that we know of, celestial systems and terrestrial products and organisms, including man that fondly fancies himself the one creature with a beginning but no end, are dissoluble, passing forms. Intelligent as well as unintelligent life is more and more plainly seen



to be of a chemical nature, and subject in all its forms to waning and dissolution. Every act of mind is accompanied with nervous waste, with consumption of tissue: mental manifestations are seen to be dependent on brain and nervous system, as contractility is upon the muscles. When all muscular action is ended, there can be no manifestation of strength: when all nervous action is ended, there can be no manifestation of soul or mind. It may as well be said that a man's bodily strength will live in its individuality after his death, as that his mind will. Hercules is as immortal as the Muses. The elements which in a particular arrangement make an individual man are themselves indestructible by death; but it does not follow that the particular arrangement of them which for a time has the individuality of Alexander or Zeno is therefore indestructible. The elements are indestructible in their essence; but the individual man, like the individual flower, plant, insect, beast, being but a temporary combination of the elements,—a form,—is in a different category. Substance is eternal, but not the forms of substance. These are perpetually changing, dissolving, passing away, giving place to one another. The decay and death of forms release the elements which have composed those forms; and the elements, entering into new combinations, proceed afresh

in the career of birth, growth, brief ripeness, decay, and dissolution, followed by new individualisation: and of these processes of nature we can discover no hint of either beginning or end. The forms of nature are of infinite variety, man being the most complex known to us among those that we call living creatures; but there is no good reason for believing that when nature has produced this high form, man (possibly not the highest of her developments), she changes her law and eternises him, any more than that she eternises any of her preceding forms. There can be no elixir of eternity for a form, whatever its robe of beauty or dignity of name. What is called soul I see to be the phenomenal expression of known material conditions. To single it out from other phenomena and think of it as existing independently, I must regard as a superstition. If we are obliged to rest other forms of energy strictly upon matter and its functions, and cannot erect them into spiritual entities superior to the laws of matter, we are committed by the logic of the case to the same course with respect to soul or mind. We are bound, in short, to consider it one particular form of force; a special function of matter resulting from a special differentiation of it.

I soon turned away from the Liberal romanticism on the subject of Jesus; which picks, chooses and refuses among the gospel materials in gratification of its purpose, and which extends this specious pleading to Christianity itself; holding forth the good and paltering with the evil in it; speaking of "the spirit of Christianity," &c., in this one-sided way. I find it quite impossible to accept the prevailing view of Jesus as a divine or supremely authoritative being, and of Christianity as fundamentally superior to all other moral and spiritual systems, and entitled to the character of the ultimate and universal religion, adapted to all conditions and individuals among mankind. I find all who put forward Jesus in this light doing so on the ground of prepossession and enthusiasm; abandoning in regard to the question all that keenness of criticism and rigid following of the scientific method which it is the glory of our age to apply to other inquiries; starting ever with the foregone conclusion, and relying for its support upon the flimsiest possible data and arguments, just such as all the so-called false religions appeal to in confirmation of their claims. I have looked; not deeply, I confess, but still with some interest

and attention, into the arguments of Jews and Mohammedans for their respective religions. I can admire the ingenuity that I find in those arguments, can recognise the sincerity that pervades them, and can easily understand how strong they appear in the eyes of the people that employ them. They greatly resemble the arguments of Christians for their religion; and I cannot say that the Christian arguments seem to me any more forcible than the others. The ability displayed on the side of the unchristian systems would surprise the many who have never sought or consented to come in contact with it. I find this one trait common to Christians and all others who plead for supernatural revelations: they may invoke reason and learning at first, but they uniformly refuse to allow their positions to be thoroughly canvassed and finally determined by such means; which are indeed incompatible with their real ruling principle, faith, that is dogmatic in the face of reason and learning, and that unfailingly falls back on the "woman's reason" which Shakspeare's Lucretia so sweetly avows. Christians of talents and attainments are seen to abandon those gifts at last in regard to their religion, and to receive it, and expect its acceptance, on the same grounds on which the dullest and most ignorant of all creeds believe. The *reason* for Christian belief

in Jesus, as for Moslem belief in Mohammed, is expressed in the words I have referred to: "I think him so because—I think him so."<sup>1</sup>

I find the very existence of Jesus of Nazareth full of uncertainty.<sup>2</sup> There were many pretenders to the Messiahship among the Jews, under the Roman dominion, and the name Jesus, or Joshua, was an exceedingly common name. The marvellousness of the age, the disposition to gather fragments of separate stories into a narrative of one ideal character that had come to be devoutly believed in, the impossibility of now sifting the scant testimony of the earliest accessible Christian witnesses, the want of other than Christian witnesses, and the absence of all clear historical recognition of Jesus as the founder of Christianity, are points which leave his identity itself very uncertain. And if he really flourished, he can hardly have been other than I have elsewhere described him, a seeker after the lost sheep of the house of Israel, a would-be restorer of the higher spiritual significance of the Law

<sup>1</sup> *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act I. Sc. II.

<sup>2</sup> "The observations of Tryphon are weighty. He denies the divinity and messianic character of Jesus Christ; and what is very remarkable, he even calls in question his existence, and his appearance here below. 'Whether he was born and where he dwelt,' says he, 'is entirely unknown.'"—COHEN: *The Deicides*, p. 244, Baltimore ed. of Eng. trans.

and the Prophets. Then, as to what are called the teachings of Jesus, on which such stress is laid, as making him to be a supernaturally divine revealer : not being original with him, they cannot, whatever their excellence, bear the weight that is thus laid upon them. In truth, they are not all excellent ; and those of them which most challenge our admiration were well known before the time of Jesus, and had long been current among Jews and Gentiles. As to the ground taken by Mr. Stopford Brooke and others, that the best spirituality of the New Testament, though not born with or peculiar to Christianity, has received a special unction and power, whether supernatural or not, as delivered by Christ ; it seems to me that this is rather a devout fancy than a well-grounded opinion ; and if correct, it cannot do more than entitle Jesus to a high place among the most efficient instructors of mankind. To single him out as standing alone, and as being the one who spake as never man spake, certainly seems extravagant, and without anything approaching to a foundation in the facts when dispassionately examined.

I have extended my observations on the subject covering the last few pages to further illustrate my departure from the Liberal Theists as well as from Christianity proper.



The religion of civilised man, though exhibiting still the signs of those roots of fear and marvellousness from which mainly its savage original sprang, is found to develop itself most freely and naturally through the union of desire with the formative imagination. We yearn for the triumph of Right over Wrong; and as in this world's affairs we have been accustomed to bide our time and move as patiently as we may, with such means as we can command, to the correction of what is wrong, and to expect the measurable accomplishment of our yearnings as a future event; so, strongly desiring the perfect reign of Goodness, and seeing that it is out of the question now, we first desire, and then believe, that it will come to pass hereafter. We feel that we would have it so if our personal will could order the matter: we feel at the same time that our will, though so well directed, is powerless for the great result: desire for the result remains; and out of this desire is born a conception of another personal will, not less righteous than ours, lifted above the fretting limitations which hedge us in, and pursuing mysteriously but surely the purpose which in us is a desire only, because we have not power to make it an act of our will. As we create this



conception, there is nothing to prevent us from endowing it in imagination with any attribute our wish demands ; and so we clothe it with the power we lack ourselves ; with a power that is absolutely resistless and cannot fail ; and thus, the will of Almighty God is the thought-out desire of the human heart. In the same way, desire is the shaper of the particulars of Revelation ; Revelation itself being the product of our earnest wish for sympathy and divine communication. We make God in our own image, because only as a Person can we bring him into relations of sympathy and communion with us. Nor can we be satisfied with a purely invisible Person for our God. Still exercising our creative prerogative, we provide him a glorified body for occasional uses. We think of him as a half-natural man, walking in the garden, enjoying the cool evening air ; talking to Israel out of clouds and flame ; showing his back to Moses. When we have pondered the matter long, and held councils and voted on it, we make him out to be an incomprehensible Trinity of Persons in himself, and thereby more available to the ends of our desire. He is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As Father, he is absolute power and holiness enthroned on high. As Son, he is a man like unto ourselves, only sinless ; our advocate and mediator, purchasing a possible salva-

tion for us, who are in some sort his fellow-creatures, for he is Son of Man as well as God, and his mother is woman and the Mother of God. As Holy Ghost, he is Comforter and Teacher, and has been seen on earth as a dove and as flame. There is a certain visibility attaching to him under all three of these divisions; but it is especially as the Son that he is near to us and convenient to our desire. The proper deity of Christ is a monstrous anthropomorphism and essentially irreverent; yet is it a genuine religious tenet, though reverence, which it violates, is one of the primary elements of religion. Christianity soon developed out of its primitive unitarian faith. Unitarianism is less religious than Evangelicalism, Evangelicalism less religious than Catholicism. All Protestantism, indeed, is a falling away from religion and from the idea of God. It enthrones the human mind instead of God; makes the individual man superior to the supposed divine external authority. Religion, it is true, is self-assertion; for in it man asserts his own nature and worships it as God: but this radical self-assertion of Religion is of a subtle sort. Protestantism is self-assertion in a grosser kind: it is open revolt and declaration of independence. The Devil was the first Whig, said Dr. Johnson. He might as correctly have said the Devil was the first Protestant,

declares the trenchant and logical Dr. O. A. Brownson.

Catholics are of all Christians the most genuine religionists and worshippers of God. Especially do they excel in the characteristically religious worship of the Son, with whom they come into daily sensible contact, as the heretic hardly can, in the sacrament of the altar.

Thus is desire fed by all the Christian dogmas, and thus is it the underlying inspiration of them all. But desire is not a rational foundation for belief; and it was impossible for my belief to abide on such a corner-stone long. If I were to have a religion, it had to be one commanding what Coleridge calls "the full acquiescence of my intellect and the deep consent of my conscience." In reaching Catholicism I had exhausted the other religions of the Christian name in their principle and seed. With Catholicism, then, my progress as a Christian pilgrim ceased. When that was renounced, there was no temptation, or possibility even, for me to go back to the broken cisterns. I had attained to the light of conclusions in agreement with the facts of consciousness and the surrounding universe, and supported by reason, to which thenceforth I have never been ashamed or afraid to turn for their test. It is not sufficient for me to *desire* a thing: if there be no better reason for

it than that, I cannot believe it. Thus I reject all religions, while I love and reverence goodness and truth, whether clothed in religious or in unreligious forms.

Mr. Capes says (*To Rome and Back*, pp. 353-4), "Of course, as soon as I was satisfied that my difficulties were unanswerable, I ceased quietly to communicate in the Roman Church; but I said nothing to those many kind hearts which would have been wrung with pain," &c. I adopted a similar course upon finding that I was no longer a Catholic. I quietly dropped the practice of religion, and for a long time held my peace upon the change. A strong motive to this course was in the lively remembrance that remained to me of the taunts I had been subjected to for not standing still in my tracks as a Protestant. I determined to keep my own counsel now, and to be sure of myself and of my ground all round to the horizon before I spoke again. The desire to save others pain was also largely influential in my case, as in that of Mr. Capes. I continued my search for truth and peace, besieging both earth and heaven in the quest. There was indeed an interrupting period, beginning soon after my relinquishment of religious stimulation, in which a bad reaction was threat-

ened, and when there was at least a languishing of my moral and spiritual affections, attended by consequences to be regretted: of which I must speak hereafter, in order that my word shall be faithful and full, and that it may do the service I wish it to do to some of my fellow-men. Some general observations which I have to make on the moral aspects of Christianity and Freethinking may fitly find a place here.

There is a high obligation to prefer light to darkness; but it is important to beware of the perils which are incidental to coming out of darkness into light. We should not after the manner and advice of some, hug darkness because of perils in the change; but we should be on our guard against the perils, and watch ourselves closely, that we fall not, to the injury of ourselves and others and the scandal of a noble cause. I am always grieved to the heart when I find a Liberal inclined to use profane or unclean language, or seeking his pleasure in immoral acts or companionship, or showing bigotry and uncharitableness in any of their shapes. I have known many Christians given to such courses; but in them the outbreaks of bodily and mental cachexy, though of course producing their natural mischiefs in other respects, are not allowed, where Christians predominate, as with us, to redound to the discredit of Christianity; for as the maxim of

monarchists is, *The King can do no wrong*, so the maxim of Christians is, *Christianity can do no wrong*; and all Christian badness is fathered upon something distinct from Christianity itself. But Freethinking is not yet orthodox; and so the failings and vices of its professed followers furnish a greatly-enjoyed triumph to its enemies, who loudly proclaim such things as demonstrating the iniquity of Freethinking; which cannot in its turn fall back upon the sanctity of a close corporation, and is unprotected by approved maxims of indemnity, like those of the monarchists and Christians. Clearly, this state of affairs imposes an additional and a very special obligation on Freethinkers to lead virtuous and exemplary lives, as happily so many of them do. Let conscientious Liberals lay this thought to heart, and extend its influence among their fellows as widely as possible. The best part of Christianity is its continual appeal to conscience. This it was that gave it so great an ultimate advantage in its early struggles with less effective spiritual agencies; and this it is which prolongs its life and sway in spite of its obsolescent dogmas and of its cramping and wounding of conscience itself with the pressure of bonds which never give way till they are broken. As long as an age or a race that has received Christianity is not above the level of that religion, that age or race



will be the better for having it. The Middle Ages were not the worse for the very corrupt Christianity which then prevailed in Europe and a part of the East. They were on the contrary much the better for it, with all its corruption; and if it had not been very corrupt, so as to be brought into the necessary adaptedness to existing Christian humanity, it could not have done half the good it did. So, now, the improved Christianity of our day, which is as different a thing from mediæval as it is from primitive Christianity, is in such agreement with the general mind of Christian people as to be very serviceable and necessary to those people, and even play the part of a schoolmaster to lead them to Free-thought. I need not point out here, that to recognise it in this just light is very different from bowing down to it as a supernatural revelation, or acknowledging it to be absolutely true and destined to be the final regenerator and perfecter of mankind. Christianity, though not "the civiliser" that Christian writers call it, has been one important agent in the civilisation of the world, and still has a part, though a much less distinguished part than formerly, to perform in the advancing work. It may be that there will never be a higher religion; but about this word religion there clusters such a haze of various meanings and meaningless thoughts, that it might



almost seem to correspond to the Scotchman's definition of metaphysics; so we will not dwell on that point now. That Christianity is to pass away and to be superseded by the higher teachings of science and regenerated natural morality, and that this latter regime is to constitute the Orthodoxy of the future, with all, and more than all, the prestige and power for good which Religion has so long enjoyed, is an assurance vouched for by the earnest that we hold in our hands. In the meantime, it is good that the religion should live and play the part that yet remains to it. It should be the desire of freethinkers, not to destroy Christianity, but to see it outgrown. The outgrowing process must be gradual, that it may be complete and beneficent. Freethought is not iconoclasm, but regeneration. I have been asked if I thought that people would be the better for putting away Christianity and taking Freethought in place of it. I reply, if they were prepared for it, undoubtedly they would be the better for the exchange: if not prepared for it, they would not be the better, but probably much the worse. If they received the soul and habit of Freethought along with the body and name, they would be making a great advance in ceasing to be Christians. But this could be only when Christianity no longer harmonised with their natures, and Freethought succeeded to the harmony

which its predecessor had lost. They would not be the better for being divorced from their religion without having the habit of genuine Free-thought to take the religion's place. Genuine Freethought is a product of the growth and training of moral and intellectual constitution together. There are, in relation to this highest sense of the term, comparatively few genuine Free-thinkers yet in the world; though a vast and continually increasing multitude are in the training-schools of Freethought. The rejection of religion does not make a genuine freethinker. He is not free in his thoughts who is in bondage to the idea of opposing religion, or to the misleading impulses of his own coarseness, his ignorance, bigotry, disposition to force his own will and opinions down other people's throats, or to be profane and licentious, in the *abandon* of his fancied freedom, to show his contempt for religion which condemns profaneness and licentiousness. Truth leads to freedom, and effectually makes free at last; but the rejection of falsehood is not the securing of truth. All falsehood rejected, truth alone remains; but one may reject the special falsehood and slavery of religion only to give one's self up to a practically more hurtful falsehood and slavery still. The Freethinker, who has undertaken to be the keeper of his own conscience, is of all men the most obliged to have

a true conscience, to follow its light, and to set a good example. It is one of his special duties to correct the wide-spread conceit that morality is the property of religion, that an unreligious man must be a bad man: and he fails in this duty signally when he lends himself to immoral courses. He, more than all men besides, should abhor such things. In avoiding, and abhorring them, he is not pandering to the false prejudices of believers: to respect and practise morality and decorum is not false prejudice; and we are not to go wrong in our conduct in order to be different from people whose errors of opinion we condemn. To do so is to indulge bad feeling, not to follow truth. It is shameful for such scandal to be brought by any one on the name of Liberal. He who rejects religion on just grounds does not reject morality along with it. Morality is not bound to religion. It is what it has been well called: the sum of human experience. On the chief points of morality good men are in general agreement. There may be speculative differences as to the sanction of morality; some deriving it from a Divine personal will, while others find it in the nature of things, or rest it on the appreciable basis of utility. The essential thing, the bond of humanity, the sense of right and duty, the flower of civilisation, is one for all men. There is no nobler quality in Freethought

than its constant appeal to the individual conscience; and this brings Freethinkers and Christians together on one side; for, as I have said, this is the best part of Christianity. The Freethinker has the same monitor in his breast that the Christian has in his. Let Christians continue to warn *everyone that nameth the name of Christ to depart from iniquity*;<sup>1</sup> and let Extra-Christians show the world not only that Freethinkers can be good men, but that Freethinking makes men good.<sup>2</sup>

“I was led,” says Mr. Capes, “face to face with the notorious fact that it has not pleased God to grant us that clear knowledge of the doctrines or duties taught by Christ for which we naturally so eagerly long.”<sup>3</sup> Now, with all respect for Mr. Capes, it does appear to me, that when a man has the good sense and courage to face this fact and understand what it means, it is time for him to cease talking about Christ as the

<sup>1</sup> II Tim. ii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> It is well said by Dr. Matthew Arnold (Preface to *St. Paul and Protestantism*), that “the very sign and condition of each new stage of spiritual progress is—*increase of task*.” Brother Liberals, let us not shrink from the increase of task that is upon us, but gird our loins manfully for its faithful performance.

<sup>3</sup> *To Rome and Back*, p. 357.

revealer and vaunting Christianity as the one Divine Revelation, and even to be diffident, at least, of calling himself a Christian. These terms all have their fixed and clear-enough meanings, and the last of them, Christian, is an historical term. If Mr. Capes and others whom I could name, admitting the "notorious fact" stated, may with propriety continue to call themselves Christians, as I do not presume to deny they may, then surely the history that is making now-a-days has a fine revolutionary smack about it—that is all. Some distinguished lights of the Broad Church, whose writings please and edify me greatly, have, I find, scarcely any more definite theism to stand on than I have. To call one's self a Christian, in such a case, is, I suppose, a matter of taste as well as of conscience. As a matter of taste and conscience both, I refuse to call myself a Christian. I feel no assurance that Jesus ever existed. If there was such a person, his history and his doctrine alike are extremely uncertain. If anything about him is clear, it is that he did not fulfil the conditions of the Hebrew Messiah, or Christ; and finally, that Hebrew notion of the Christ is to my mind a vain and superstition imagination. How, then, can I call myself a Christian? As to persons who believe that Jesus really flourished eighteen hundred years ago, and was the highest teacher

and exemplar of spirituality the world has ever had ; but who, like me, reject the messianic conception, the Christ doctrine of the Jews :—perhaps they may rightly claim the Christian name, though I may not. In speaking of this class I have had others in view rather than Mr. Capes. I do not know what are his views about Jesus. He tells us in bold print that he has gone “back” to the Church of England ; which he perceives to be different from primitive Christianity, but approves as the only millennial order in which the lion of freethought can lie down with the lamb of Christian piety “without a shattering of the existing formularies of our forefathers,” and with the “hope gradually to reconcile the past with the future.” I take leave of Mr. Capes with cordial good-will and thanks for his hints and companionship ; seeing plainly indeed from his book that he never really entered into the spirit of the Catholic religion, but more than half disposed to join in his praise of the English Church as the broadest of ecclesiastical bodies ; and leaning to it myself, as I lean to so many things English, though never, even in my dreams, connecting it with the Apostles.

A word now as to the descriptive term “Extra-Christian” in the title of this book. It



is not, like "Christian," an historic term. It is not classical, nor precise, nor in general use with a clear conventional meaning to it. Perhaps it would even be ambiguous without this explanation. As I use it, it does not mean *very Christian indeed*, but *beyond Christianity*; and corresponds to the adverb *On* in the first part of the title. I may be said to have been *infra-Christian* while finding my way *To Rome*; I was Christian while I stayed there; and from the point at which Mr. Capes turned *Back* and I went *On*, I have been *Extra-Christian*.

When, after that memorable discovery in the State Library, I found myself free to read and think and to follow the pursuit of Truth whithersoever it should lead me, my mind stretched itself, as it were, with a cheering sense of capacity for fresh effort with a better result to follow. Having perused without satisfaction some of the works of the old-fashioned deists, and some coarsely written and ill-printed American publications of the anti-christian type, I got hold of Mr. Froude's very differently conceived *Nemesis of Faith*, and found it most interesting and helpful. Seeing at the end of the book a list of John Chapman's Liberal publications, I sent to London for several of them, embracing Mr. Greg's *Creed*



of *Christendom*, Mr. Foxton's *Popular Christianity*, and the Martineau-Atkinson *Letters* already mentioned; none of which, I believe, had then been reprinted in America. In the last-named book I was delighted to strike upon a vein of inquiry and observation which had for some time warmly interested me. It had happened to me to learn something of the true miracles of Animal Magnetism, which had greatly helped me in dealing with the apocryphal ones of the theologians; and I had grieved over the attitude of so large a proportion of cultivated people, particularly among men of science, towards a domain of philosophical inquiry not inferior to any in interest and importance, nor in materials for the scientific method to work out to the grandest and most beneficent results. The mischievous poaching on this domain by sciologists and vulgar pretenders, a natural consequence of its neglect by the class that ought to explore it, and the general ignoring (to use Boyle's word in its only legitimate sense) of the subject by writers congenial to my own mind, made the timely acquaintance with the *Letters* most agreeable and beneficial. Critics of the work seem to me prone to overlook a point plainly enough stated in its preface: that the design in publishing this correspondence between two friends was to make its suggestiveness available for certain minds

that were by previous study and direction fitted for the communication. In this light I can testify to its usefulness. I will here add, that I was assured by Miss Martineau herself, in 1858, that the reports so industriously propagated, of the loss of friends, &c., from the publication of the *Letters*, were utterly without foundation.<sup>1</sup>

Among other books which I read at this time with lasting advantage, were the *Life of Blanco White*, and *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann*. The latter, recommended to me by one eminent in wisdom and in literary fame, was, I may observe, my introduction to the mind of the great Goethe; who, following Shakspeare and Bacon, must here be homaged as crowning a fresh epoch in my reading life. Not much later I made acquaintance with the *Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, in the excellent compendious translation by Harriet Martineau.

<sup>1</sup> These injurious reports, with other misstatements, were published in the first, and I think also in the second, edition of Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Bronte*. Subsequently Mrs. Gaskell made what corrections she could; but the mischief was done. I never was personally acquainted with the gifted woman who wrote *Jane Eyre*; but I have trustworthy information that while her intentions were always just, she often mistook her fancies for facts, and spoke of them accordingly.

N. B.—Since the remarks in the text and note on this page were written, Miss Martineau has died; and her

It is necessary to the completeness of this record that it should include an episode which I cannot recall without a degree of sorrow, though I feel that to it I am beholden for increase of self-knowledge and self-control, and for a stronger sense of the connexion of those qualities with an abiding virtue and happiness. Having been bound so long by the spirit and practice of an ascetic religion, I did not come into the freedom of my own soul and body without the danger common in such cases of a reaction in the opposite direction of loose living. In giving up the Catholic religion I had parted with a very lofty theocratic conception. There is an unfailing lowering of the moral tone, I think, upon the loss of a high ideal. The depression may not immediately succeed the loss; it may be but temporary, and in happy instances may be very soon removed: but it is sure to occur. To a young man, lacking the sober experience of maturity, and accustomed hitherto to look to supernatural perils on the one hand, and supernatural helps on the other, the realities of life, its real perils and safeguards and salvation, are for a

Autobiography is now published, to speak for her with a better voice than mine.

time below the level of his strained mental eyesight ; and there is a sore, weary, feeling in him, after the struggle and disappointment he has gone through, as if the best and highest things, which have been falsely embodied for him all this time, had no real existence, or were vain objects of human pursuit. It has been drilled into him as the teaching of religion, that Right is to be followed for fear of hell, and for the sake of an "exceeding great reward" in heaven. This selfish and mercenary principle, which by a common Christian perversion is called noble and necessary to good living, has blurred and weakened his conscientiousness to a degree from which it can not recover in a day, and has prepared him to yield to the seductions of pleasure as the only sufficiently stimulating substitute for the broken promises of faith. Something of this experience I had, not without scath and food for repentance ; but for a passing stage only, and mingled with elements of moral growth which, unless for the thought of possible injury to others by an unworthy example, would leave small occasion for sadness in the retrospect. It became apparent to me that Pleasure is a deceitful guide, and that I was doing wrong to give so much heed to her persuasions. Conscience asserted itself with renewed power, now that it was no longer in chains. I tried—from that time to this I have

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constantly tried—to know and to do my duty, not for fear of God or Devil, not to be paid exorbitantly for it hereafter; but BECAUSE IT IS RIGHT.

From the period now reached in this recension there are no further struggles of mind to be recorded. For the last twenty-five years there has been, I believe, no essential change in my views on the subject of religion. The design has been carried out of showing how these views were attained by regular and sure stages, developing the argument and the workings of temperament together. When one has thought so earnestly and so long upon this important subject, and is so penetrated with a conviction of the mischiefs of the old teaching, and of the value and beauty of the truth that is taking its place, can his conscience let him be silent, so as to leave it a matter of doubt or misconception which side he is on? Is he not bound, if a respectable person possessed of any tolerable gift of expression, to give his authenticated testimony as a contribution, small though it be, to the accumulated records of mental experience? The number of minds that will recognise my position as what they have themselves arrived at, or are tending to, is becoming larger and larger every

day ; and what I write now under a ban will at no very distant future be commonplace and daily bread of the popular intelligence. In the meantime the impulse must be supplied to such as wait for it. Some who read these pages will turn away frowning and shaking their heads. They will turn away, but not from a sense of unreasonableness in what I have written : rather the contrary. They will fear that it is reasonable, and their established modes of thinking will make the suspected truth unpleasant to them. Some of these will find themselves recurring to the subject at a future time, and looking at it in a better light ; when they will understand me as they cannot now, in the first shock and resentment of collision. Seeing that I do not class myself with the theists, some who are fond of calling names will be swift to pronounce that I am an atheist. I am too old and seasoned by this time to be afraid of a name ; and if this reprobated name atheist seem fitting, or if it make up to any pious souls in ever so small a degree for the impracticableness of burning me at the stake, I ought not to begrudge its application, and I am not likely to breathe less freely nor to sleep less soundly on account of it. It is right, however, that I should say that the name does not seem to me suited to my case. While I cannot join theists, in or out of the churches,

in affirming a specific Deity behind Nature, neither can I join atheists in denying the possibility of such a Being; still less do I deny what Parker calls the quality of God. This I find and reverence *in* Nature, without pretending to know of any source for it beyond. There is to my apprehension a very beautiful truth in that text which has been so perversely interpreted: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Goodness as a force is reflected to us in the best of our fellow-creatures. In the good man we *see the Father*, in the only possible or desirable sense. Luther says somewhere—I cannot hunt up the passage now—that *that* is God on which the heart rests with trust, hope, and love. When we are drawn and built up in the right by any magnet of righteousness whatever, *there* is God for us, and thenceforth we have seen and known the Father. What avails it to quarrel about the form or time of the incarnation? It was Vishnu, it was Christ, if you will. I care not for your names and dates and metaphysics: the Word is made flesh and dwells among us still.

I believe, then, in the quality of God; and I have tried to show how the theme of the Infinite takes effect upon my mind. I can no more adore a magnified human image with the cultivated theist than I can a wooden or stone fetich with the barbarous theist: but in rejecting the



former object of worship I no more deny what is inconceivable, nor what of Truth and Goodness is connoted in the image, than I deny inscrutable Power (not to speak here of Goodness and Truth) in rejecting the fetich. I am conscientiously obliged to put away the conventional verbiage about "design" and "First Cause"; which shocks me with its horrible familiarity and pettiness on the most awful of themes, and thus seems to me as irreverent as unphilosophical. Definite individualised forms of existence of which our limited faculties are fitted to take cognisance we may indeed question and pursue in search of causal conditions; for by their mutableness, and by our ability, such as it is, to grapple with them, they are pronounced effects; but it is a hasty and pernicious notion that existence of itself necessarily implies a cause. Only *change* involves such an implication. Events imply causes: simple existence does not imply any such thing. If it did, the imagined First Cause, being an existence, would require a cause, *i. e.*, would be no real First Cause. The finite is the content of the infinite: that is all we can say. Earths, suns, systems, with all their animate and inanimate productions, are finite forms, and we may have our nebular theories and what not, to account for them; but these, vast and overpowering as they are to our minds, are mere grains

in the Universe; whose boundlessness exhausts our range of causes and our faculty of conception itself; so that we reach at last, not an outside Creator, but, as Strauss declares,<sup>1</sup> a self-centred Cosmos. The design argument puts the cart before the horse, mistakes the impression for the seal, and, in all the instances adduced, invites us to contemplate the perfect image of imperfection. To ascribe the adaptations in nature to intelligent design, which is a human attribute, is to invite criticism of that in which all are interested; and it then appears that the "design," or the execution of it, is of a low order, denying, instead of betokening, Supreme Wisdom or Almightiness. Indeed, the advocates of the Paleyan doctrine find themselves driven into a sort of remonstrance against present injustice by the Deity, and claim damages from him on that account. This is one of their standing arguments for a future life. All such views are painfully repulsive to me. The making of man and his concerns the grand topic and puzzle of the Divine counsels; the portentous nature ascribed to each individual member of the human family, even to the extent of regarding the new-born soul, in contradiction to philosophy, as an additional force in the universe; the supernatural

<sup>1</sup> *The Old Faith and the New*: Amer. ed. Vol. II. p. 132.

importance claimed for the little ball in the heavens on which we live, the satellite of a sun that is itself many times less than the known star Sirius, and is lost in its insignificance amid the galaxies of infinite space:—all this pitiful clinging to the pseudo-philosophy and superstition of past ages, with all the festering conceits and bigotries that it keeps alive, sickens my heart, and compels the protest of my understanding and will as I record it here. But I set up no presumptuous dogma of my own in turn. If I may on some accounts seem to belong to the atheists, with more show of propriety still may I on other accounts be reckoned among the theists. I disown both names, theist and atheist, as inappropriate in such a case as mine. I declare that I have not, and cannot have, any dogma whatever on Origin and Absolute Being.<sup>1</sup> I turn away as decidedly from the dogma, or the dogmatic spirit, of the atheist as from that of the theist, on a subject which I feel a solemn assu-

<sup>1</sup> “When I attempt to give the power which I see manifested in the Universe an objective form, personal or otherwise [other], it slips away from me, declining all intellectual manipulation. I dare not, save poetically, use the pronoun ‘he’ regarding it; I dare not call it a ‘mind’; I refuse to call it a ‘cause.’ Its mystery overshadows me, but it remains a mystery; while the objective frames which my neighbours try to make it fit, simply distort and desecrate it.”—*Tyndall*.

rance is infinitely too high for knowledge, and infinitely too sacred for levity and assumption, on the part of man. When men lay down what seem to me absurd and contradictory theories, I do not pretend to respect them as even possible truth; and I may think it my duty to protest against them, at least to the extent of declaring that they are impossible and shocking to my own mind; but I do not oppose to them any theories of my own about what can never be known. No doubt the two terms theist and atheist are in the sharpest antithesis, and one is naturally suggestive of the other; but it by no means follows that they cover the whole ground. There is most certainly a *tertium quid*; and this *tertium quid* does really seem to me to furnish the only position which a thinker can occupy on the subject without departing from philosophy and reason. Theists that have broken with the old religious traditions find it impossible to retain the God doctrine in its integrity, or as it is still asserted by the Church and cherished in the popular imagination. They modify or relinquish the personality of God, and, pressed by the problem of Evil, give up omnipotence as an attribute of the Divine Being, or, as in a remarkable book of the day,<sup>1</sup> part with goodness,

<sup>1</sup> *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*: Amer. ed., pp. 310-11.

or ruling benevolence, in the Supreme. John Stuart Mill,<sup>1</sup> favouring theism, sketched a limited Deity as the possible Lord of the universe. This is the tendency on one side of theism; while on the other it tends to check free thought and carry its disciples back into the mire and confusion of the churches. I do not deny the possibility or conceivableness of a limited Divine Being as the Author of Nature; but I declare that the supposition seems to me uncalled for and unsupported by any sound reasoning whatever; and it has long been clear to my mind, that every straining after a second Infinite—Nature being practically infinite for us—fails, as all human striving must fail, to solve the Mystery of Existence, and in its utmost reach carries us no farther than to the footstool of a mighty but still finite Demiurgus, behind whom the awful curtain hangs impenetrable as ever.

I have religiosity enough. By my original constitution I am of the sort that crave and create gods and guardian angels for themselves. I greatly enjoyed such beings of the imagination before I found out that they are only imaginary; and communion with the angelic spirits was perhaps as congenial and helpful as communion with God. No one would more highly value

<sup>1</sup> *Three Essays on Religion.*

the supports of a true religion than I should; but I cannot accept the Christian mythology as true any more than I can the Pagan; nor am I the kind of eclectic that can select from the moral and spiritual side of Christianity what is not even peculiar to that system, and call the arbitrary selection a genuine, special, and divine religion. Religion, as I conceive it, always has relation to the gods, or to some invisible personal or *quasi*-personal Power, distinct from and superior to Nature and its laws. I have no knowledge or instinct of such a Power. I do not deny the existence of such, but I see no just ground for asserting it. It is my deliberate and solemn conviction, that the subject is above the sphere of our human intelligence; and that dogmatism, at any rate, if not all speculation, concerning it is irreverence, folly, and mischief. This strong impression is confirmed in me when, looking over all the world and through all the periods of its history, I find that the God idea—the personification of human attributes as Divine and Absolute, that refined idolatry in various degrees, from which, seeing it in this light, I am obliged to turn away—has always and everywhere led men into extravagance of imagination and grievous perversions of conduct. I do not deny that it is associated with great good also, and that it is a necessary part of human devel-



opment: but I cannot perceive in it any ray of supernatural divinity, nor acknowledge it in any of its forms, from fetichism to monotheism, to be a veracious and satisfying corner-stone of religion.

In saying that I should value a true religion, I must not be misunderstood to mean that I should be glad if Christianity according to its time-honoured traditions were true. A thousand thousand times no! Nothing could be more dreadful, more deplorable, than that. A millennium of Neros and Caligulas over the human race were a blessing above all estimation in comparison with the God and the "scheme" of regular Christian divinity still preached in Catholic and Protestant churches the world over. But if, instead of the God in imitation of whom the Inquisition was founded and worked, and the Calvinists burnt Servetus, and Cromwell massacred the Irish at Drogheda and Wexford; and in farther and farther remove from whom, and from his teachings to the "chosen people" of old and to the Church in later times, we are reforming our legal codes, admitting the "reign of law" in nature, and giving up the "conflict with science";—if instead of the monstrous Deity and the mythical religion that have had their day and are in the evening of it now, there were indeed a powerful and holy Being, our Maker,



Providence, and loving Father, and a reasonable worship of affection, gratitude, and well-founded trust,—that were indeed a thing to be glad of and a joy forever. I do not want “a God to glorify”; but one to love and thank, and to derive both spiritual and material help from, would be very precious. (The refined theists who say that we may resort to God for spiritual but not for material help, contradict the instinct on which they rely; and if I did not feel sure that their real worship is different from what they preach, I should have little sympathy with *their* desire.) I do not turn away from theism because I am thankless, or self-sufficing, or less spiritually needy than other men. I turn away from it because it seems to me untrue. The balance of probability, to which its advocates lay claim, is, I think, decidedly against it. It explains nothing, but only raises fresh and more terrible mysteries. A good God<sup>1</sup> and a communication from him I have admitted to be desirable; but desire for a thing is no proof that the thing is attainable, or even that it has any other than an abstract existence in the mind. Taking actual religion, I *cannot* believe. I can not without lying to my own heart and under-

<sup>1</sup> Who, however, would necessarily be a finite being, for us to hold the supposed relation to him.

standing call Christianity essentially different in its origin and nature from the other religions. I cannot believe in *their* divinity ; neither can I believe in *its*. To me, all religions are alike human evolutions. The unwisdom of rating one of them above the rest as divinely superior in its origin and essence, is as clear as anything can possibly be. This was the conclusion I arrived at many years ago ; and every hour of reflection since, with all the reading and conscience-searching that I have kept up, has confirmed me in it. It is my duty to say to all who will listen to me, that the conclusions I have reached and here faithfully recorded, are to me a source of peace and satisfaction such as I was never able to feel in the acceptance of religious doctrines after my nineteenth or twentieth year. I can never while I live cease to rejoice over my deliverance from the murky, morbid, and unspeakably painful atmosphere of religious teaching. The results of my Christian and extra-Christian experience will shock many good people, as well as a still larger number perhaps who are not particularly good. To the former class I can only repeat that reason and conscience in my case have *compelled* the renunciation of those traditions which hold possession of their minds as sacred and fundamental ; and that, morally and spiritually, they and I are not, or need not be, in a state of

separation. Let me not be judged by shibboleths. If by "God" they mean not a magnified Man, but the Goodness that cheers and hallows life, or the inscrutable Power manifested in us and in all things, then I believe in God as firmly as they. If by "heaven" they mean not an Oriental city, but the blessedness of the pure in heart, I believe with them in that too. Moral obligation is as indefeasible and sacred in my eyes as in theirs. I no more require a supernatural sanction for its validity than for the truth of mathematics. While I am not able by any kind of searching to find out God, in the sense of the religions, while I get no glimpse whatever of any source of nature, and refuse to beguile myself or others with any ingannation or pretence on the subject, I have nevertheless as deep and as constraining a faith as any theist can possibly have, in the holiness and power which are in nature as solar life is in the air. The sense of duty and the moral habit of righteousness are dearer to me than words can tell; and I draw nigh in spirit to all who love and cherish them and show them forth in their lives. This principle and this habit make a precious spiritual quality, which is distributed, though in very unequal degrees, among mankind, and is the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. I know that many have

a much larger measure of the quality than I have, and I worship it in them, and would fain live with such persons, that their shadow might fall upon me every day. I find it in books sometimes; F. W. Newman's work on *The Soul* for instance, in which the attempt at dogma fails, but author and reader "see God" together all the time. What religionists call the grace of God I call the grace of humanity; and I seek it to purify and fortify my soul. It is one of the priceless blessings of the position I have attained, that I have no longer to draw my skirts about me for fear of heterodox contact, but am free to welcome and inhale this grace of humanity wherever I find it. Religious faith separated me from my kind: Free-Thought restores me to my proper connexion with it. There is a loose understanding of the word religion, in many minds, by which it is made synonymous with goodness. In this sense of the word, I certainly do not reject religion, but on the contrary honour and love it, and desire with all my heart to practise it. I do not indeed think this is the proper meaning of religion; but I note it here, to guard against misconception and misrepresentation. I have no more doubt of the untruth of Christian dogmas than I have of the untruth of Braminical dogmas; nor is there any more of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 8.

terror or authority for me in the former than in the latter. I utterly reject theology, especially the patristic and Calvinistic theology which claims the name of Orthodox among Christians, and which in its distinctive tenets is to me not merely false, but loathsome ; so that I cannot be content to live or die with any taint of it upon me. At the same time, I respect the sincere faith of believers, and have no scorn or derision for any of their devout practices not in conflict with charity. How, indeed, could I, who know by experience how nourishing to conscience rites may be, and how tenderly sacred they are to the souls of believers,—how could I be so forgetful of the freshest and purest years of my life as to join with the coarse and unfeeling who scoff at such things ? I am not willing to hurt or offend any one by the language I use ; though I will not leave my meaning in doubt for fear of doing this thing that I do not intend. Reverence is one of the strongest principles of my nature, and is indeed an important part of the ground on which I reject theology. What is revered by others has a claim on my tenderness and forbearance, however far removed from my own belief. For this reason I am not in sympathy with those persons who ridicule or despise the faith and practices of any religion. I know that in such forms are embodied the highest conceptions and

purest aspirations of a vast proportion of mankind; and that the forms themselves are in the present order indispensable to the souls that cling to them. Justice, kindness, and a regard for the highest interests of us all, as well as of the cause of truth itself, demand that such things should be treated with respect, though never that one should pretend to believe in them when he does not, or refrain from resisting by word and deed, when occasion calls for it, their false claims and encroachments. I am fretted with no impatience for the overthrow of Christianity, but am content to see men gradually passing to a higher plane of thought and morals through the sure advance of science. Angry polemics are not to my taste. The exposition of principles and the sowing of good seed are what I believe in and would forward as best I may. Public opposition to the cherished beliefs of the community is a painful attitude to me; the more painful, because so small a part of the community, especially of those minds that I should most like to conciliate, will be able at present to see my views in their true light and real moral relations. I must, however, do my duty, whatever the pain and whatever the consequences. I am profoundly convinced of the disabling effect of error upon the mind; that the evil goes beyond the particular error itself, and works dete-



rioration of the whole mental action and moral being of the errorist, besides standing constantly in the way of the acceptance and diffusion of progressively unfolding truth. My observation shows me this every day, and keeps me alive to the need men have of intercommunication on subjects where there is the greatest entanglement of thought, and, for so many, such a crying need of enlightenment. To go on joined to our idols when we are sufficiently awakened to suspect at least that they *are* idols, is an immoral condition that is wide-spread and replete with baneful consequences. If many who are in this condition are incorrigible Ephraims, others are not, but deserve all that can be done for them in the way of plain speaking and earnest endeavour. I am deeply impressed with belief that the errors of Christian theology are very hurtful, that they hinder moral as well as intellectual advancement, and call for energetic protest and opposition in the right channels for such action. I know that there is in Christianity what Jonathan Edwards calls "the love of divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellence"; and I admit the redeeming force of this element which staves off the fate of destruction which would otherwise in our day of light speedily overtake the system for its false doctrines and moral distortions; but the false doc-



trines and moral distortions are not therefore to be allowed unquestioned sway. On fitting occasions the protest of earnest minds is to be recorded against them. Such an occasion arises, it seems to me, in the situation in which I find myself. I feel that I ought to utter and leave on record the thought that is so earnest and abiding in me on these subjects. It is surely wrong to distrust and be afraid of the consequences of speaking the truth, and to shrink from protesting in proper time and place and spirit against the false and wrong, lest some evil should ensue from the course. When the occasion arises, one should do one's duty by speaking out boldly and clearly, leaving consequences to take care of themselves. The true is too often postponed in tenderness and timid consideration towards the false; and great harm has come of such time-serving. The little-thinking part of the community are to be prepared for the superseding views which they have hitherto been ignorant or afraid of; and how can they be prepared if the habitual thinkers hold back from frank communication with them on the subject? There is too little of this kind of communication from earnest minded persons who are not professional teachers. Every one who has been impelled by his nature to ponder and learn on these matters of universal concernment, and who

has attained to a strong conviction of his own on them, is under a kind of obligation, I think, to open himself to others according to the gift that is in him. Every one has some gift, every one can find some opportunity, every one can do something in this way; and considering how many in every community refuse to think for themselves on anything that is not business or immediate personal convenience, every one who is an original thinker beyond these narrow bounds is a real power for good if only he be sure of himself and have the conscience to discharge his responsibility aright. The common torpidity which allows of the surrender of men's minds,—reason and conscience together,—to the keeping of others who stand guard over the storehouse of religious tradition, is a heart sickening phenomenon which forbids one to be shut up in himself when he understands what it is. My neighbour, an educated and fairly intelligent man, scorns the circumstantial account in Herodotus of the sun's veering from its wonted course; understanding what an upturning of nature it would have been, and how none could have survived to testify to it, or have been born to write about it afterwards: in short, how impossible any such thing was, and how incredible such a narrative is to be regarded in our day, though carefully recorded by the historian, and

vouched for by the Egyptian priests. And this same fairly intelligent neighbour reads in his Bible of a similar event's having happened in Palestine to give the Israelites more time to slaughter their adversaries,<sup>1</sup> and again at the choice of a Hebrew king for a sign that the Lord had changed His mind concerning him;<sup>2</sup> and these latter accounts my neighbour receives with as easy and childlike a faith as if he were still in the nursery, or as if he had never learned and pronounced upon the intrinsic incredibility of such fantastic traditions. When these stories were originally related, it argued no special torpidity of mind to believe in them. People had not then the knowledge and quickened intelligence to reject them spontaneously. The philosophy and the religion of the time were in natural agreement. The earth was the centre of the universe, and was an extended plain, with sun, moon, and stars dancing attendance on it. There were no laws of nature. The gods who made all things moved all things as they pleased at the moment. The sun was but a great astral lamp, easily shifted by a divine hand; and though extraordinary, it would not be impossible, for it to come up in the west some morning. Supernatural prodigies were as credi-

<sup>1</sup> Josh. x. 13.

<sup>2</sup> II Kings xx. 10, 11.

ble as occurrences in nature; and what was attested by the priests was sacredly unquestionable. All this has been changed for us by the advance in general intelligence, except in the last point, the sacred unquestionableness of priestly attestation; which survives in the submissiveness which is still popularly yielded to the most absurd and immoral extravagances of the Jewish and Christian mythologies; and it is noteworthy that this submissiveness is not, in the case of our people, from the old-time slavish fear of the sacred order half so much as from the unconscientious torpidity of which I have spoken, which locks their minds in willing stagnation on the subject of religion, and makes them blind obstructives in the path of ever-advancing science and morals. The marvellousness of people who are not much cultivated greatly outruns their experience; and such people easily believe and cling to religious traditions. Cultivation is extending; but the mass of men, even in what are called enlightened countries, are comparatively uncultivated in the higher regions of thought, and with them the difficulties of religion are not felt so soon nor so strongly as with a certain smaller class. Persons who neither read nor think independently are not uncommonly irritated at the suggestion of an objection to any part of the received religious teaching, or any-

thing else that appeals to what would be for them so strange an exercise of the thinking powers. They are displeased with any appeal of the kind; but many of them are endowed with good reasoning faculties and with true though sluggish consciences; and if the appeal be made in the right manner, and with the right perseverance, those inborn qualities will be aroused from their sloth into honourable activity, and the shame and mischief of their present condition will be lessened day by day. This is a consummation so devoutly to be wished, that one who can help toward it by speaking out of the inspiration of a yet warm personal experience should feel it a duty to "attempt the end and never stand to doubt." He who according to Zschokke's simile has been unable to endure the suffocating furnished lodgings of tradition, but has had to build his own house for himself, ought to have sufficiently learned the lesson that other souls need, and that so many are waiting to learn. As no imprimatur has to be asked of either church or state for free-thinking now, so no apology (in the sense of excuse) is needed for a book with an honest and earnest purpose in it, which any part of the public may be the better for at last. The people who will frown upon such a publication are the ones who need it most. I have been in no haste to speak, but

have long and diligently pondered the subject, giving heed to the ablest apologists, old and new, on the religious side; trying myself and my views by every possible test; restraining my words till some are dead who would have been grieved by their publication: and now, when the line of middle life is passed, and I do not feel as if I had time for longer waiting, this protest and record, which I have desired more and more every day for years to make and leave behind me, avails itself of the "art preservative" at last. If it meets with the condemnation of some whose approbation I should highly value, they will not be so many as would have condemned me even a few years ago; and I feel thoroughly assured that it is only present condemnation I shall have to suffer: the future will be with me, or will censure only the tameness and incompleteness with which I have discharged my task.

The papers which occupy the remaining pages of this volume have for the most part been selected from my notes and correspondence as additional illustrations of the narrative and argument contained in the Memoir. Not more than one or two of them, I think, have before appeared in print.



“Christianity is not a theory or speculation, but a life; not philosophy of life, but a life and a living process. Try it. It has been eighteen hundred years in existence; and has one individual left a record like the following: ‘I tried it and it did not answer. I made the experiment faithfully according to the direction; and the result has been a conviction of my own credulity’?”—*Coleridge*. I think that such a record as Coleridge here asks about has repeatedly been made. I can very sincerely say in my own case, that I tried Christianity and it did not answer. It does seem to me that I made the experiment faithfully according to the direction; and the result was a conviction of my own credulity. It would have been moral ruin to persist in the attempt to believe, or the profession of belief, against the protest of my rational nature. Christianity is not a life alone, but a theory in connexion with a life; and the living process is coloured and moulded all through by the speculation. Every religion is a life, if you will: the living process is not peculiar to Christianity. Put



“Islam” for “Christianity,” and Coleridge’s words make as valid a plea for a Moslem as for a Christian to utter. The faithful Mohammedan may say of his religion not less sincerely and not less forcibly than the Christian says of his, that it is not a theory but a life; and that all that is necessary to make it answer to any one’s needs is to try it according to the direction. The reply to both Christian and Mohammedan is, that their experience is partial, and that they are not disinterested and clear-sighted enough to judge for all of their fellow-creatures.

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Says Montalembert (*Letters to a Schoolfellow*): “Whenever philosophy gives rise in your mind to the slightest doubt, to the most trifling hesitation, fly back to your fortress, and rest from the fatigues of earthly science among the imperishable enjoyments of an humble and silent faith.” See Henry Rogers’s *Eclipse of Faith* for similar advice. Pascal’s counsel in the same direction is well known. A thoroughly ingenuous mind cannot follow the course here recommended. We should still be believing the earth to be a plain, and heresy to be the greatest of sins, if it had been possible to make such blinding counsels triumph up to this time. Mental constitution is indeed very various. With

many keenly conscientious souls, blinking an intellectual difficulty and running away from it to entrench themselves in the citadel of faith, as Montalembert advises, is as impossible, and is felt to be as immoral, as crime itself. The soul that can follow Pascal's and Montalembert's and Rogers's plan is of a different order, and may find peace by quenching the spirit: and such a soul, shrinking in terror from its own instincts, lays it to the account of a wicked will when one refuses to be crucified on a creed.

There can be no doubt that acting upon a predetermined profession of faith, long kept up, in connexion with fear and aversion in regard to what contradicts the factitious creed, is in many cases eventually productive of belief; and in this way the will does really mould the understanding. Religious faith is a standing crusade against reason.

*On the assertion that it is our duty to believe in a certain way.* This assertion is made by persons who intend to deduce from it a moral obligation on us to believe in *their* way. In logical value it is equivalent to the assertion that it is our duty to have seventy pulsations to the

minute. Belief is in itself essentially involuntary. But there are antecedent states and motives out of which belief grows and takes effect ; and in dealing with these the question of moral obligation may properly be considered. We are certainly bound to deal ingenuously with every question which we undertake to consider, and not to let any unworthy motive turn us away from a fair balancing of its opposing sides. We are bound to enlighten our minds, and to the best of our ability to decide justly and truly. Some writer has said that “it is not our duty to *have* a right belief—which from our circumstances and capacities may not be in our power—but to *take pains in order that we may have* a right belief.” This is true. The error of certain religious casuists is not in declaring a general indirect obligation to believe the truth according to the above explanation, but in assuming that what seems to them in a particular case to be true must necessarily so seem to other minds unless those minds be blinded by their own sinfulness. This error, which is the basis of religious persecution, and which has borne such accursed fruits that one would think it should now be universally known in its true nature, and be repudiated by all enlightened mankind, remains however yet to be extirpated.

What is one to do when the food provided

by the Church has become first chaff and then poison to him? Must he go on chewing and sickening and sinking under it, for fear God will be angry with him if he leave off? I could not put out or seal up my eyes so as to avoid seeing that the Church was not supernaturally kept from going wrong, but did just what one would expect of a natural human organisation that it would do:—blundered and misled its followers in some cases, though it conducted them aright in others. It requires immense faith to hold to the Church in spite of everything;—with natural probability and accomplished facts both against her. I had not, when it came to the last resort, such faith in me. I could not retrace my steps and return to the Protestant quagmire. I had to go, and I went, out of the other door.

Religious conversion, involving acceptance or change of creed, is never a purely logical process. The Church, while not forgetting “motives of credibility,” holds to a special inclining grace, as well as to the *donum fidei* itself; and in the New Testament we read of the Father’s *drawing whom he will*, and find the sanctifying spirit likened to the wind, which *bloweth where it listeth*,<sup>1</sup> that is, beyond compulsion or under-

<sup>1</sup> *The spirit breatheth*, runs the Catholic version: *spiritus ubi spirat vult*.

standing by us. In the spirit of faith, seeing all sorts of people drawn into the Church, I ascribed their conversions, which were often manifestly independent of regular ratiocination, to inward and inexplicable grace. Men as well as women are swayed by their emotions, and are influenced by various complex moral agencies besides, in adopting a religion for themselves. As situation and training, as a rule, determine one's religious profession, so when a new or unexpected turn of the kind occurs, it may generally be traced, and undoubtedly is always due, to certain elements of an emotional character, which combine to produce a result that may seem to be brought about by study and discussion. What a wide field of learning and research is covered by polemics, and how little is it considered what a real perscrutation here would be and would involve: history, its facts and lessons; philosophy; criticism; language; ethnology, &c. &c. And how all must be moulded and determined by the peculiar constitution of the searcher! Even before I durst reason quite freely concerning these matters, I felt that I ought not to let the condition of any other person's stomach or brain, or his inherited tendencies, or outward circumstances, determine the complexion of *my* opinions. In regarding Protestants from a Catholic point of view, it was apparent to me that, apart from the

instigation of the Devil, there were controlling natural causes, not essentially evil, which attached them with a certain sincerity to their false religion; and which were of so insuperable a sort that nothing short of a miracle, such as Divine Providence did not in general choose to work, could effect a conversion to the Catholic faith. And in regard to Catholics, at the same time, I could not help perceiving that the world and the flesh, leaving the Devil out of the question, had much to do with their *status* as members of the true Church. They were Catholics in the matrix before they were born; they were born Catholics before they received the *donum fidei* in baptism; and they remained Catholics through the controlling influence of habit and natural connexions as much as through grace.

Each one who believes finds it so easy and natural, and even necessary, to believe in his own religion, and so plainly right to disbelieve in other people's religions, and to censure other people for believing such stupid and monstrous things. It is like two hostile sides solemnly entoning *Te Deum* by turns, for their Providential success in slaughtering each other. And this thing goes on for ages without the majority of mankind finding out the truth of the matter!

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The solemn seriousness of religion has a strong attraction for me ; but the levities of religion, so to speak, its fables and fancies and conceits, which are insisted on as part and parcel of it, are very repulsive. This weak and hurtful side of Christianity was forcibly rebuked by Celsus.

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The Providence theory of Bossuet's Universal History, while natural from the author's point of view, is utterly subversive of true historical criticism.

"I must see God in history, or I must not look at it at all," says Dr. Dewey. In another place he uses "I will" in a similar strain. I have very little patience with *must* and *will* in such cases. They tell the tale of most people's belief in religious matters, however.

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The key which supernaturalism presents to unlock the mystery of the universe does not fit. Catholicism and the sturdier heresies recognise Christianity as a concrete historical fact, and offer a totally misreading explanation of it. The



heterodox or Liberal religionists resolve the tree into the grain of mustard seed ; and Christianity under *their* explanation is but a refined baptised gentilism.

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Gilfillan says of the Bible : " A Book intrinsically so divine, so simple, so far superior to all others, and so adapted to the wants of human nature, cannot be imagined to be deceived or to deceive others in the relation of facts." A good specimen of Christian paralogism is this. Mark the latent idolatry which makes obeisance before the Book, as a kind of divine being that " can not be imagined *to be deceived*" ! The Book, whether taken in its entirety as pronounced upon by councils of men, or considered in its several parts as written, copied, and translated by individual penmen and scholars, is seen to be a human production ; and so it must at the start share with other books the presumption of fallibility and imperfection, which are attributes of all human productions. That it is endowed with an intrinsic divinity which lifts it out of the category of human productions, is a speculation, not a known fact like its naturalness ; and a speculation, moreover, which is not only unverified and unverifiable, but actually overthrown by the falsities and contradictions which the vol-

ume contains. I will remark here as to the adaptation of the Book, that though familiar with it from my early years, I never discovered this quality of it in my own case; but the spiritual treatises of later times have proved infinitely better adapted to *my* human nature.

We are told by ardent Christian advocates that the Bible is just what a revelation from God should be. The very contrary of this is the truth. The Koran, which was prepared in the character of a revelation, has much more verisimilitude in that light than the Bible, which was not so prepared by its authors, and which nowhere asserts its own divinity, but in several places says just the contrary. It is quite clear when the subject is dispassionately looked at, that neither Church nor Bible shows the light of the Divine Spirit. Both are human, man-made, man-bespeaking throughout. The Church is what we find other human organisations to be: showing ignorance in her utterances and corruption in her practice under the influence of ignorant and corrupt men. The Bible is just what we find other books to be. There is no unfailing Divine accuracy in it, as showing God's authorship: it is characterised throughout by the defective human traits of the hands that indited it. Why, and with what pretence of assurance, do we select four out of the numerous gospels that were current among the

earlier Christians, and, while setting an idolatrous veneration on those humanly chosenly four, leave the rest to dishonor and oblivion?

Izaak Walton, speaking in a letter to a friend of the prayers that he goes to church to offer, says,—“They be the litany and collects of the Church, composed by those learned and devout men whom you and I have trusted to tell us which is and which is not the written word of God; and trusted also to translate those Scriptures into English.” That is it. Convenient, trouble-saving trust in such local guides as are at hand, “learned and devout men” who are supposed to know the things of God as the Scripture declares only the Spirit of God *can* know them,<sup>1</sup> is the foundation of Christian faith and the ground on which persons are stigmatised as infidels and reprobates for a dissenting opinion.

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Since Orthodoxy grew weak and timid, how greatly its manners have improved! But really its heart has been touched; and the improvement is there as well as on the outside.

Do you ask me if the Orthodox teaching may not possibly be true? I reply, only on the postulate that our primal instincts of justice,

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. ii. 11.

truth, &c., may be deceitful. If truth may be what we call untruth, reason unreason, love hate, &c., *then* Orthodoxy may be true: but if the intellectual and moral perceptions are trustworthy, Orthodoxy is certainly false.

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I have a friend who will speak of any estimable person as "a good Christian." The same confusion of thought lurks in the common expression "pure religion." What is pure religion? Does it lie in piety and devotion? Then Catholicism has it, as I can testify after years of experience of that religion. Is it the Golden Rule and elevated morality? Then the heterodox and unbelievers have it as well as the strictest Christians; and Jews and Gentiles had it long before either Catholic or Protestant existed. Does it depend upon faith in the Atonement and the other fundamental tenets of Orthodoxy? Then the woman who ministered to suffering Mungo Park in the wilds of Africa had it not; and the author of the General Epistle of James made a great mistake in his definition of it ages before her.

If my memory serves me rightly, it was in the person of that precious piece of royal piety and villany Louis the Eleventh, that the King of France became "his Most Christian Majesty."

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I have said that the solemn seriousness of religion has a strong attraction for me. I have a keen sense of the ludicrous in common things; but any attempt at a burlesque of religion is most offensive to my feelings; and I respect Walter Savage Landor for saying that he did not like any one who made free with God or the ladies. The vulgar ribaldry which finds its way into so much of the popular antichristian writing of the day, and which appears also in the stock joking of the newspapers without any express irreligious purpose, moves my strongest disgust. So also the hackneyed wit with which many Christians make jokes about grace at meals, saying their prayers, &c., excites my repugnance irresistibly. The solemn seriousness that I love sheds its balm upon me in the slow and sweet strains of church organs, and in harmonious congregational singing; but it is too great a price to pay for this soothing enjoyment to commit myself to the walls where decorum obliges one to stay through the further service of an offensive doctrinal liturgy, or of misnamed extemporaneous praying in platitudes which have been put together with study and pains to tickle the ears of the congregation. These things put the solemn seriousness to flight; and, despite an occasional

excellent sermon, the general effect of going to church is to make me feel that my time has been wasted.

There is a beautiful church in Paris, one of the beautiful and sacred things which the late atrocious Commune passed by in its rage; where I used to listen with closed eyes and restful soul to what sounded like angel voices and seraph harps, on a still Sunday morning. The nearest approach to this effect at home is in the notes of the processional hymn chaunted by the surpliced boys of one of our high-church choirs.

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Man, teach the religious philosophers, is so made that he cannot be satisfied till he has abandoned his thorny position of nescience in regard to subjects above nature, and settled in the belief of a contriving Deity, who after many struggles and failures, at last consummates a divine scheme by which a portion of mankind are finally rescued from evil, while the rest are identified with it forever and ever. When this comforting belief is reached, the mind is at rest. No insolvable problem remains to trouble it further; and the immeasurable superiority of faith over nescience is established beyond all question.

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To make morals depend on religion is to contradict the testimony of all time. The growth of morals is the growth of human experience; and every advance in morals bears men away from the antecedent religious type. A very prominent illustration of this fact is afforded by the changes in law which the improvement in public sentiment has rendered imperative. The old laws were framed in the spirit and in reference to the teachings of religion, and were consequently bad; and they are necessarily altered or abolished as mankind advance in culture and freedom. In the time of our ancestors men were hearty believers in religion; and so it seemed to them right that the law should hang a child for stealing a pocket-handkerchief and burn old women for witchcraft. We find the spirit of such laws in Paley's Moral Philosophy. The eminent judge Sir Matthew Hale said that he made no doubt at all that there were such creatures as witches: "for, first, the Scriptures had affirmed so much; secondly, the wisdom of all nations had provided laws against such persons, which is an argument of their confidence of such a crime." Sir Matthew was right in saying that the laws were an argument of the confidence of mankind in the existence of the crime; but we



now perceive that it was not wisdom, but unwisdom, ignorance, and a fatal reliance on false standards, that led to their having such laws. The letter of the laws is still respected among us; but such is the growth of public sentiment that it is no longer possible to carry out their spirit as in the earlier time. Our law-makers, while still admitting, as private persons, that it was divinely right under the old Jewish law to stone a froward child to death, and to execute people for witchcraft and for picking up sticks on the Sabbath, would shrink with horror from preserving such godlike enactments in their codes; and they even presume to charge their Christian forefathers with superstition for their lingering attachment to the divine model of legislation contained in the Bible. This happy change—for surely the most devoted religionist must allow one to call it happy—is an advance in morals, not proceeding from religion, which enforced a very different lesson when it was in power; but coming to pass in spite of religion, whose word remains to contradict it, but whose power in this respect is so greatly weakened, that it can only for a short time to come hinder moral advances and reforms which shall divorce theology and law forever. In the meantime, good Christian people, answer the question: Is this purging of the law a real advance and a thing to rejoice in, or is it

an impious and atheistical decline, to be lamented and prayed against?

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Is it a true instinct that prompts us to prefer decency and good repute and the enjoyment of life to dirt and misjudgment and the wrecking of earthly happiness? Why do we call ourselves Christians, and yet strive for a good name, and keep ourselves clean and well-clothed, and take care of our health, instead of courting disesteem, and being ragged beggars, macerated hermits and graveolent saints? It was a mark of my unfitness for the genuine Christian vocation, that I could never get over my recoil from St. Hilarion, who went much farther than Dr. Johnson in his aversion to clean linen. Such very dirty patterns of saintship as Anthony and Hilarion and Simon the Stylite I could not abide. It was very bad in me; but I constantly felt that no supererogation of piety can make up for want of soap and water. Physiology and decency concurred to disgust me with monks and hermits. Could I reverence in a Christian ascetic what repelled me in his Indian rival?

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The craving for sympathy, support, and leading, is very strong in some natures; and un-

doubtedly the Church answers in a great degree to this craving. It is nevertheless evident that the truth of the Church's doctrine and the obligation to belong to the Church do not follow from the fact just stated; though a certain relative fitness of the Church and its system is thereby substantiated. The craving is supplied without the Church also. It has been felt and effectually answered where the Church is unknown. It is felt continually where Christianity is utterly inoperative; and is supplied from other sources. The *comfort* of the Real Presence (a comfort which I can vouch for) does not prove the Real Presence. So the comfort and the value of reference to a supposed Divine Being do not prove that there is such a being in reality. The craving leads to the invocation of saints and angels, as well as to prayer to God; and to belief and trust in the help of angelic spirits as well as to belief and trust in God. That Christians can do so well without the subordinate spirits as Protestants are seen to do, shows how largely this habit of religious faith and dependence is the fruit of education and usage, and points to the further emancipation of mankind to the extent of discarding *all* appeals to and reliance on supernatural assistance, and the substitution of known and appreciable natural influences in place of the traditional objects of superstition.

The god that a man talks to is his fetich, great or small.

Christian fetichism, though it dies hard, will be as glaringly absurd in time as heathen fetichism is now.

The moral sentiment, the conscientious principle in man, has gone through many stages of development, wearing for a time religious and theological and empirical shapes, as the principle of science has also done. The former has with the spread of intellectual freedom grown into ripeness and independence, and gives token of the place it is to hold in the new era, where also the affections and reverence and geniality of the mind will have their proper part to play. Already the true object of these emotions is felt and followed in an increasing degree, and is day by day receiving in practice more of its rightful recognition. Though so much of the juices of human strength and tenderness has been poured out in vain and cruel asceticism, and though such loads of the heart's most precious offerings are still squandered in the service of superstition, yet all the time it has been, and now it is more and more widely seen to be, Humanity itself that is the true refuge and fountain of supply for man. When one of our race is without the needed help from his kind on earth, it is Humanity still that he turns to, and only Humanity

that he can believe in or trust. Humanity is then for him enthroned in the sky; and only by reliance on the *human* attributes of sympathy, compassion, loving-kindness, can he put up the prayer of faith to his God.

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According to natural politics (and morals), the people are to judge for themselves of the right of violent revolution. According to theological politics (as the proper result of Revelation), the Divine order on earth is supreme over governments and people alike, and is empowered to depose the former and to free the latter from the obligation of allegiance. The divine right of kings not subject to the Church, has been the doctrine of some Protestants. It was a favourite with James the First of England, who had not been able to do much with it while he was only James the Sixth of Scotland; and his son and grandson lost their kingdom, the former his head also, through inherited attachment to the doctrine. Protestants in general, however, have taken the ground of natural politics as above stated; and so have many Catholics; and this is practically the principle of all enlightened nations at the present day. It is inconsistent nevertheless with the theological

premises which are still admitted. Politics, as a branch of ethics, pertains to the Divine order, and to the tribunal of the spiritual judge: so that the independence of the secular authority, asserted by Gallicans and other tepid Christians, logically involves denial of the supernaturalist principle and corner-stone. As a Catholic, I saw that the theological premises justified the Ultramontane claims for the Papacy; and I accordingly held and asserted Ultramontaniam as the only genuine Christian ground. This position became more and more painful as the impression grew irresistibly and sunk into my mind of the mischiefs and wrong that had been wrought, and that were necessarily liable to be wrought, by Papal interference. I perceived that there was manifestly no Divine provision for the just working of the theological principle; and thus the conclusion became forced that it was not a true principle. I still saw that it was a necessary part of theology; and so the further conclusion followed that theology itself was not true. I was much vexed in my Catholic experience by the disingenuous treatment by Catholic writers in the English language of two points of the Catholic teaching: Exclusive Salvation, and the full force and effect of Papal Supremacy. These writers, almost without exception, have been so daunted by the ineradicable repugnance of the Anglo-



Saxon mind to the genuine Catholic view on the two points mentioned, as to gloss over and distort the truth in a pitiable manner. Almost, but not quite, without exception. A few have bravely stood by their religion, as if they believed in it above everything else, and gloried in its opposition to the corrupt reason and conscience of fallen human nature. Cardinal Manning has spoken out clearly enough at times; and our American hero of the faith, Dr. Brownson, was, first and last, a thorough-going uncompromising exponent of genuine Catholicism in its most offensive aspects. Brownson did not hesitate to declare (*Brownson's Quarterly Review*, July 1850, p. 328) that "the worst cardinal that ever lived, while he retains the faith, is superior to the best heretic or schismatic that ever existed": and in a letter "from an earnest priest" to Dr. Brownson, published in the latter's *Review* for October 1874, the priest writes: "I studied in Carlow, Ireland; where since my childhood I heard always that 'no one except Catholics would be saved.' So steadfastly do the Irish Catholics cling to this opinion, that they would not so much as pray God to have mercy on a dead Protestant." The earnest priest is right: where the great faith of Catholics has stomach for it, the unadulterated doctrine is what they are fed on. But as I have



dealt somewhat at length already with the topic of Exclusive Salvation, that may be dismissed here, where something remains to be said concerning the Papal prerogative. The late Archbishop Kenrick, generally so sound and luminous with his Catholic pen, has not treated this subject satisfactorily in his otherwise admirable work on the Primacy. It is in vain for any one to rest the Pope's dispensing power on a mere *consensus* of the Catholic nations. The archbishop does not say downright for himself that this was all; but he seems to invite the reader to the conclusion. Doubtless there was such a *consensus*; but this *consensus* itself was only a part of the unity of faith, which did not admit of the denial of the Pope's supremacy over the temporal as well as the spiritual order; and indubitably the Popes themselves claimed the deposing and dispensing powers on the higher ground of *jus divinum*, by virtue of their office of God's representative, and not on the ground of *jus humanum*, or the political order of the Middle Ages. The sovereign Pontiffs did not ask any human consent for their acts of this kind; but claimed to exercise them by a right inherent in their apostolic office, derived, not from any king or subjects on earth, but from the Almighty Sovereign of heaven and earth, who had built the Church upon the Papacy, and sub-

jected the whole order of earthly society to the authority of the Church. The Church (according to the genuine Christian theory) is the divine order in this fallen world. It lifts the curse of Adam, absolves from or fixes the guilt of actual sin, dispenses the streams of supernatural grace, defines the obligations of governments and private men according to the law of God, of which it is the keeper and interpreter, and enforces those obligations, when it sees fit to do so, with such means as are in its hands. In order to the efficient performance of all its functions, it is furnished, as an integral part of its constitution, with a central, living, executive Head. This Head, the Pope, is supreme over the Church, with the bishops under him; and over civil governments, with the temporal rulers under him. Temporal rulers hold their authority, whether with their own acknowledgment or not, from him. The bishops derive the episcopate from him, and as Bishop of Rome he shares it with them; but as Pope he enjoys alone the apostolate, immediately from Christ. Thus the Pope is invested with supremacy to rule, as well as with infallibility to teach *ex cathedra*, in the place of Christ, who has *the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession* (Ps. ii. 8). So the Pope, as *alter Christus*, may dispose of the territories of

the earth, as he did when he gave England to William the Conqueror, Ireland to Henry the Second, the countries of America to the Spanish sovereigns, &c. This jurisdiction, it should be understood, pertains to his supremacy, and not to his infallibility; so that the civil obligations of Catholics are not altered, as Mr. Gladstone supposes, by the late definition by the Vatican Council of what, by the way, is no new doctrine, though until the late decree a Catholic might speculatively question it without incurring the Church's anathema. It is quite clear that the Popes have regarded their supremacy over the temporal order as having the same divine origin as their supremacy over the spiritual order; and have explicitly declared so in repeated instances. This fact should be decisive with all who understand what the Catholic conception of the Papacy is. I was not able to entertain any doubt on the subject when I was a Catholic; and I always felt then that the Pope's authority over me *as a citizen* was paramount, being superior to that of the government of my country, as well as to that of my own conscience. How I should have acted in the impossible case of a conflict between the two parties, the Pope and my civil government, I cannot say. That Catholics in the mass are trustworthy citizens and subjects, I am thoroughly satisfied. History shows them to have

been such in past periods when the religious sentiment and spiritual tie were a thousand times stronger than now; and the logic of doctrine, which was nearly always weaker than the instinct of patriotism, is at its lowest ebb to-day. Men, as Sir Thomas Browne says of states, "are not governed by ergotisms." The vast body of religionists, moreover, do not see, and will not see, what the logic of their doctrine commits them to. And the governments of the United States and Great Britain may confidently parody the French lady's remark about perdition for the aristocracy, and depend upon it that the Pope will think twice before damning governments of their quality.

A far greater danger to civil obligations and to the just powers and operations of governments all over the world than Pope or priest can threaten now, lies in the prevalence of secret societies.

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In the old times morality was fastened to theology with a padlock. Some bold bad men, as they were called, picked the lock and found that they could do without it. The Reformation produced a key; but the lock was rusty, and hands fumbled with lock and key for a good

while. The unlocking is effected however ; and not Catholics alone, but many Protestants likewise, declare that if the padlock be taken off morality will be undone. Yes, say the Radicals: it will be *undone*, in the sense that it will be unfastened from theology ; and the sooner the better. Of course the Radicals count for nothing. *They* believe that morality is not derived from the Decalogue ; that there was morality, right and wrong and all that, before there was any Moses. What can you expect from such infidels ? They say the padlock is no more than so much old iron. This is not to be endured. We must turn over a new leaf, beginning with our proposed amendment to the Constitution, making Christianity the established religion, putting Radicals, Jews, &c., upon a lower grade of citizenship ; tolerating them at first, and biding our time to get them under severer law, when we shall be strong enough to expand the amendment so as to make the Christianity it establishes properly definite, by expressly recognising belief in the Trinity and the other fundamental tenets of Orthodoxy as part of the law of the land, and thus outlawing, or righteously subordinating, latitudinarians who have the presumption to call themselves Christians without holding, any more than Jews and Radicals themselves, those saving doctrines which alone shall be in

harmony with the American Constitution. How long after that it will be before one of the parties of Orthodoxy shall prevail so as to get itself enthroned over the rest in the Constitution, is not a pressing question at present. Let us begin with the general Christian amendment. Our right to that being allowed, our right to more in the same direction will not admit of logical denial. In the meantime, we must sternly confront the Radicals when they demand further secularisation of existing law. It may not be possible to bring about such a glorious recognition of the supernatural authority of the Bible as would be effected by a re-enactment of the laws against witchcraft; but we can preserve the precious mementoes of established religion in our test-books, we can keep up the Sunday laws, we can maintain our privileges as untaxed ecclesiastical-property-holders. When Radicals oppose us on these points, we can charge them with wishing to overthrow the moral law, and continue to refer to the Decalogue as the ground of moral obligation; impressing upon the public mind that adultery and murder are of the same character with resistance to our dictation about Sunday; and that Moses is to be accepted as the authority for the natural morality he was born under, and for the observance of a day which he never enjoined or kept. And if any have the assurance to say

that this is not straightforward honest pleading on our side, let them be made to understand, by every instrumentality in our power, that the end justifies the means; and that what is dishonest humanly looked at, may be the highest honesty from a divine point of view.



FROM AN EXTENDED CORRESPONDENCE WITH  
AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN.

.... You have been urgent with me, and have spoken in plain and severe language: you will have no right to complain if I discard needless ceremony in my reply.... I would assail no one; but I will not speak equivocally to any one to please him, or to procure favour for myself; nor will I yield to unjust assault from any quarter. .... If you suppose that I could believe in religion and not accept and practise it, you do not know me. Not for one hour, not for one moment, could I withhold my heart and my open allegiance from a system that I believed to be divinely given and thereby made obligatory on mankind. It would not be a greater misconception to associate me with Calvinism itself,—that “superfetation of blasphemy,” as Coleridge calls it,—against which the protest of my record is especially directed, than to associate me with indifferentism, with neglect of a high and recognised duty. I could not believe in a religion and

not practise it. As searcher, as Christian, as Catholic, as Freethinker, I have always been constitutionally *thorough*. This is a necessity of my nature; which if you do not know you do not know me. . . . You call upon me to receive your opinions with the respect due to a divine revelation. I deny that your opinions, or those of your school, are any more divine than other men's. I deny that you have any more "revelation" than I have. What you style the Oracle of Truth is simply a body of ancient writings, the works of human imaginations and human hands; selected by men whom you have precluded yourself from calling infallible or inspired, and, so selected, made sacred to you by association and confidence in your early mentors and guides. You take your Bible upon just such grounds as the Mohammedan takes his Koran on: the ground of early education, of long prepossession and association, of the deeply imprinted notion that it is a sin to call its divinity in question. This last ground effectually cuts off any impartial examination and fair conclusion in the premises. Inspiration belongs to the supernatural order: how can human testimony—one man's declaration to another—suffice for its attestation? Without a supernatural witness we can know nothing of the supernatural divinity of a writing or selection of writings out of the many.

You have no supernatural witness. When the Reformers, whom you follow in this matter, rejected the infallible Church, they abandoned the only plausible pretence of a supernatural witness. Thenceforward there remained for them and their adherents only human judgment to fall back on; and this, however good in its order, the natural, can never transcend that order, so as to judge supernaturally of the inspiration, any more than of the meaning, of the Bible writings. For the great mass of Protestants, there is absolutely no authority for the Bible beyond the taken-for-granted word of their fallible uncertain teachers; which they neither care nor are able to reinforce by investigation for themselves; and if in your case there has been any kind of critical study added, it has been with the predetermined issue in your mind from first to last, colouring all the data, and secured by the conviction that you were *morally bound* to arrive at the fixed intellectual conclusion that had been taught you. And if your study had been thoroughly candid, your conclusion could still be only a common human conclusion, with no shadow of divinity about it. You have no supernatural witness: and if the human authority of the Protestant elders suffices to prove the Bible, then the human authority of the Persian elders, is as good for the Zend-Avesta, of the Indian elders for the Vedas,

of the Mohammedan elders for the Koran. You have the same right and reason to make flesh your arm as they have; but you have not, any more than they, justification for denouncing as wicked any one's refusal to worship the arm of flesh as Divine. Your synods and doctors and Sunday-school teachers are no more divine than the corresponding functionaries of the unchristian religions; and to reject the former's opinion about the Bible is no more wicked, no more disobedience to a divine authority, than to reject the opinions of the latter about their sacred books. . . . Your miracles are like the others, only not so well attested as some of the latter. Besides, miracles are neither provable themselves nor in the nature of proofs of any side whatever. They are only the *argumentum ad ignorantiam*; and on Christian grounds themselves, it is right to say, as Archbishop Trench does say (*On the Miracles*, Amer. ed., p. 33), that "to believe on the authority of miracles may commit us to Anti-christ instead of Christ." . . . The interpretation of your supposed divine Book must needs be to a great extent mere guessing at a hidden meaning; and human guesswork cannot with any propriety be dignified with the name of divine revelation. You revive the fable of the Sphinx. It is truly a piece of guesswork that you say the Deity has propounded, with destruction waiting on a wrong

solution. Would a revealing God have left the meaning of his words in such doubt? Can you believe that your side alone is favoured with an insight of the Divine intention? Would a fundamental faith in the Atonement have been left to debate, or to the ratiocination of fallible understandings? And if such faith be a matter of grace, what becomes of the earnest and good men who have failed to seize the right view? *Can you believe (as the logic of your position seems to require) that they are abandoned to a strong delusion, that they may be damned?* — (II Thess. ii. 11, 12. I heard a famous preacher in your brother's church make this application of the text, some years ago.) Excuse me for saying, as I must, that this varnished Protestant orthodoxy of yours is very ridiculous. The lion's skin has no terrors for one who knows the real lion. When Protestantism was young, it was heterodox: Protestants were then new religionists, come-outers, like the men you call infidels now. Timid souls must have looked from within the Church upon the Protestant innovators as being at least in great danger of losing their own souls, and as threatening the goodness of others by upsetting morality, which the Church declared to be bound up with her faith, as you think it is bound up with yours now. It is trying yet to a sensitive soul to stand alone, or in a heterodox

minority, confronted by a confident claimant of exclusive legitimacy and salvation. It was much more trying in times that are past; and the first Reformers, especially in handfuls, must have felt fearful and abashed. However clear their spiritual safety may seem to us now, they must have quaked for themselves sometimes, with the great towering Christian Orthodoxy of the time against them and frowning them down. But note with me, that they were not really reprobate, and that the spread of Protestantism has not been destructive of morality. Thinking on this, perhaps you will by and by open your mind a little wider still, and understand that the farther and farther extension of Free Thought does not imperil salvation nor threaten morality any more than the first undeveloped Protestantism did, whatever the words or fears of disciples of close corporations may continue to forebode. You are sure that the original Protestants were safe, though outside of the Church and solemnly cursed in God's name for denying the faith. And you are very sure you are safe in your Evangelicalism. The Unitarian is as sure he is safe in rejecting your fundamental doctrines. The Turk is as sure in the faith of Mohammed as the Christian in the faith of Christ. And I, my friend, am as sure I am safe in my rejection of your religion as any one can possibly be in his rejection, in life and in

death, of what does not commend itself to him as true. . . . I have searched my soul, looking for possible latent motives influencing the change. The result is, I am firmly convinced that I am morally as well as intellectually right in my rejection of Catholicism and of Christianity. . . . Observe, I do not reject Christianity hastily, or from a spirit of opposition. I reject it deliberately, from my conscience, after long examination and experience of it, and with full knowledge of what it is *and what it is not*. This may seem to you an impossible thing: for me it is the only possible thing. . . . Would you have me go back to Rome? No: you would recommend to me the half-way house of Evangelicalism. But I am not a half-way man. If the road be the true one, I must journey the whole way on it, must not leave it till it stops of itself, and thereby tells me my destination is reached. Besides, Evangelicalism is not safe if your theory be true, which hangs salvation on the true faith and supernatural oracle. You have no sound excuse for being outside of Catholicism which will not justify me in being outside of Christianity. Many good people assure me that Catholicism is the necessary way of salvation; and indeed, if the abiding by one's carefully formed and conscientious convictions on the subject of religion can possibly be damnable, it is plain to



me that your heresy puts you in the same danger as is incurred by my unbelief. As you are assured of the truth of Revelation and of the sinfulness of unbelief, so the Catholic is assured of the truth of Catholicism and the sinfulness of rejecting it or remaining outside of its pale. And if you can believe in the reprobation of men for rejecting Christianity, you should tremble for yourself, and not blame nor wonder at the Catholic when he asserts the reprobation of such as reject what is in his view the only Christianity. Do you not see, when you look at the case from within and from without, that to make historical and metaphysical opinions a test of salvation is proper to bigots only, and, viewed in relation to the law of human nature which renders it impossible for all to think alike in speculative matters, is in contradiction to the Right of Private Judgment, which you must maintain to justify the Reformation?....But the case here is, I *cannot* believe as you wish. It is as *impossible* to me to accept your religious notions as to accept those of the Jew, the Mohammedan, or the Buddhist. Thanks for your good wishes, but don't sigh for impossibilities. You would think it worse than loss of time, if the advocate of a foreign religion were to apply himself to the task of converting you to his faith. That faith, however, is as dear and sacred to him as yours

is to you ; and it seems to him as natural to believe it, and as unjustifiable to reject it, as it seems to you natural to believe Christianity, and unjustifiable not to believe it. You are an infidel in relation to his religion, as he is, and as I am, in relation to yours. You are not afraid of being damned for *your* infidelity ; and you may rely on it, other people's infidelity is no more damnable than yours. . . . I am not alone in rejecting your "revelation." From its first presentment to the present hour, it has failed to win the acceptance of the vast majority of mankind. . . . Your "revelation" to a small fraction of the race, your "salvation" for a much smaller fraction still, do not fulfil the conditions you have yourself supposed. To infer from a supposed universal need, a partial, largely-failing remedy, is poor reasoning. If mankind were in need of revelation, the giving of Christianity to a slender minority of mankind would not respond to the need. But how vain to suppose that man waits on supernatural intervention ! History and experience show that his needs are met and his improvement effected, not supernaturally, but by natural development. A daily increasing knowledge of the physical and moral laws of his own and surrounding nature is the true saving revelation that he requires and enjoys. It is a revelation without mythology ; a

revelation not fixed in stereotyped tradition from the ignorant misjudging past; but one that expands with the growing intelligence and higher enlightenment of the race it is given to bless. No revelation can account for the Universe, or nullify the fact of the existence of Evil; but the lesson we are learning better and better as time goes on is, that our real problems and duties are to be studied and discharged by a faithful following of nature's lights, and not by clinging to old fables or relying on any kind of magic. . . . You think your doctrine of another life so superior to my no-doctrine on the subject; but your reckoning is very short-sighted. You should envy, not pity, the man who does not share your faith on this point. I speak from experience here; for I held your doctrine once, and I know that to hold it in earnest, to ponder it, that is, in its application to ourselves and to our fellow-creatures, is to wear a crown of thorns on the heart. The thought of the future life that was preached to me was so full of pain that I could not help a feeling of envy towards the people that did not hold the doctrine. I never could so lose myself for any long time in the vision of heaven as to forget the black counterpart which puts out heaven's light, and leaves the doctrine a hideous nightmare to the soul; and I can scarcely remember a moment of my later Christian think-

ing on the subject when it would not have been a joyful exchange to me to accept the prospect of man's annihilation in place of the woeful eternity held out by the Christian teaching. And are you, *can* you be, happy in such a belief? I do not mean in intervals of ease, when buoyed up with a hope of heaven for yourself. I know what that is, and I have learned to be ashamed of the frequent intervals of pleasure that I thus enjoyed. But with me, the pleasure was soon succeeded by pain:—how is it with you? Can you take the doctrine into your heart understandingly, and feel that it is one to rejoice in and wish to be true? Do not give a hasty answer at the impulse of religious zeal; but think a little on my question. Dear friend, I know that you are too true of heart to forget that the “lost” are your brethren as well as the “saved.” The prospect for yourself, as for any other good man, is extremely doubtful if your doctrine be true;<sup>1</sup> but suppose you are saved, you and some

<sup>1</sup> Who that listens with a believing mind to the gospel account of salvation but must share the amazement of the primitive disciples when it was propounded to them, and must join in their shuddering exclamation—“*Who then can be saved?*” Remembering that Scripture explicitly sets forth that salvation is a natural impossibility (Matt. xix. 26; Mark x. 27), and that only in a “few” instances does it come to pass supernaturally (Matt. vii. 14; xx. 16); and remembering further what

others; while millions upon millions of your fellow-men are lost—in the peculiarly horrible Christian sense of the word *lost*—would this be happiness? To stony-hearted, light-minded, or intensely selfish men it might;—but to *you*?—I need not speak of the multitude of the damned: if *one* soul rolled in the hopeless hell you imagine, there could not without moral mutilation be happy saints in heaven. Thus your doctrine denies Heaven when it asserts Hell; and instead of being noble and comforting in its character, is unworthy and horrifying beyond measure. I cannot look upon you as happy in holding it. If you tell me that you are, I reply that I willingly make over to you all the happiness of such a doctrine; and that I am very, very happy in not holding it. That good Christian Albert Barnes declared (in his published correspondence with Gerrit Smith) that the contemplation of mankind and human destiny filled him with gloom and discouragement: and truly from his, the Orthodox-Christian, point of view, it is most gloomy and heartsickening. I have thought on this point over and over again. I have pondered it by death-beds as well as in the light of

the failure of salvation is understood to imply, we are surely justified in holding that Christianity unfolds the darkest and most depressing prospect that has ever chilled and blighted the heart of man.

life. I am sure that the comfort you speak of is not to be depended on. Oh the wretched *comfort* of believing that one is saved and another damned! Deliver me from that, and from the absorbing, all-satisfying contemplation of my own salvation! The case of —— is one in point, but not to your purpose. The tender mercy he believes in is very cruel. It saves him, perhaps, and one brother. It damns two others of the family, and leaves the fate of the rest fearfully uncertain. Give me the comfort of *not* believing here. I can never forget that funeral sermon two years ago. It can hardly have comforted you: me it heartily disgusted.... The consolation you speak of in life and in death is one of convention and human sympathy. I am so far from disputing it, that I have a full consciousness of it; but I know that it is not peculiar to Christianity, nor to the principle of religion. The other religions have it as well as Christianity; and it is enjoyed outside of all the religions. It is as real in the case of the Jew or the Mussulman as in the case of the Christian. It no more depends on belief in the Son of God than on belief in the Mother of God. It is no more divine in one case than in another. A clear conscience is more consoling to a healthy mind than any religious belief; and calmness at death, as during life, is a phenomenon of the



nervous system rather than of either belief or conscience. Doubtless it is consoling and encouraging to be in communion with surrounding minds ; and the consolation is greatest when we are weakest, and must be inestimably precious in the solemn parting hour. The Turk would choose to die among Mohammedans, the Christian among Christians, the unbeliever among sensible kindly people who did not look upon him as ready salted for the fire. I have said that the consolation is real, and that it is not divine (supernaturally divine). It is indeed very sweetly human. I do not undervalue it when it proceeds from acquiescence in the opinions of a present majority, though there is a price which I cannot afford to pay for this kind of consolation. I will not put out the eyes of my understanding and blow selfishness to a white heat to enjoy it. As to that poor miserable plea of *safety*,—I have already pointed out that you are no safer than I in that point of view. There is no safety for anybody if it be dangerous to refuse to bow to one who claims that his fold or belief is necessary to salvation. There are too many contradictory claims of this sort, all equally arrogant and equally foolish. But it is unworthy of rational and upright minds to argue in a strain which rates truth and untruth together as commodities, and invites to the choice



of one or the other as a matter of expediency or personal advantage. Prove your positions, and I *must* believe in them, whether I like it or not. To threaten me with Divine condemnation for what is not within the control of my will, and what it were a base exercise of will to control in that way if I could;—to threaten Heaven's wrath for not believing what seems to me false, is an extravagance that you ought to open your eyes to without further delay.

....Man might, it is conceivable, be inspired with a revelation above reason; but nothing in the shape of human statements is above reason, or too sacred for its tests. The creeds and commentaries of the religious world are an open book to be read and canvassed; not a divinity too high to be confronted, but before whose footstool we must kneel and tremble and believe....

....I cannot submit to have a man-made system imposed upon me as Divine. I see the naturalness of the rise and progress of Christianity in the world. I can trace the gradual development of this religion in hierarchy and doctrine, as I can the tribal invasions, the fusion of nations, the growth of feudalism, and succeeding events in modern history. I see how the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation were with repeated touchings fashioned and stamped by theologians and councils in the first four cen-

turies ; how the Atonement was moulded by accepted notions of Roman law ; and how the Pope became head of the Church through the worldly importance of his see, as the worldly importance of New York gets the first American Cardinal. I see how the Reformers of the sixteenth century (under the laws of human nature still, as the Apostles and their primitive Christianity were) made a "new departure" for themselves, and got out an improved gospel which later Protestantism has still further amended and modernised. Seeing these things, and knowing Christianity from within as well as from without, having an intimate personal experience of what it is, as well as of how it seems to the believer, I am under a sacred obligation, while honouring its heroes and acknowledging all the merits that attach to it, to protest against the error of separating it from all other human evolutions and calling it supernatural, when it is as evidently natural as anything else in history or life. I am under a sacred obligation, I say, to protest against this error of worshipping a man-made system as divine, and to refuse to be a yoke-fellow with you in subordinating my conscience to the rule of any of its conflicting authorities. I satisfied myself on this subject long ago, and gave up the church platform then forever. And this theological creed, this ecclesiastical faith which men are disputing over

yet ; which you hold in one shape and others in other shapes ; which is so manifestly the product of men's varying judgments and fancies, instead of being the unspotted heavenly revelation which each one in his own sense proclaims it to be ;— *this* you would have me return to and call divine ! No, my friend.. The truth which I have gained is my most precious possession. I will hold it fast, and will not let it go. I prize it because it is truth, and so above all price ; and because I feel the great excellence and comfort of it, now that through much travail of heart and mind I have made it my own. I have held it many years, have faced life and death with it, and never found it fail. To bid me give it up for a church creed which is repulsive to me, which I made trial of long ago, and proved to be false, cruel, and impossible of belief, is as if you should ask me to put out my eyes and become an opium-eater, to avoid seeing things as they are, and to be fed on the visions of a distempered imagination.

.... Your last letter is very gratifying. It is more kindly and argumentative than anything I have had from you before. Had you spoken in that strain formerly, my replies could hardly have been just what they were. But it is all

the better, perhaps, that we have been moved to utter ourselves with great plainness on both sides. The "soft answer" is invaluable against some kinds of wrath; but it will not do on all occasions. . . . I have much sympathy with what you say about the spirit of prayer, the aspirations after holiness, the sentiment of dependence and gratitude, and the necessity of going out of ourselves to reach the great peace and content of the soul. The feelings which you express on these topics, and which wake their proper response in me, are above and beyond all polemics, and draw men together everywhere when conscience is stirred and pride of opinion is at rest. To associate the best that we know with what is above all knowledge is natural to the mind as soon as the first point of civilisation is attained; and herein lies the most enduring element of the strength of religion, as well as the excellence and beauty that belong to it. I admit the partial correctness of the sentiment quoted by you from the author of *Ecce Homo*. It struck me forcibly upon my first reading of the admirable paper in which it occurs. Undoubtedly the morality of *Christians* is closely connected with their belief in the Christian religion; and this consideration renders it a peculiarly delicate and ungracious office here to animadvert on the falsities and mischiefs of Christianity. It is nevertheless a

duty to do this from time to time; and, due regard being had to fitness of occasion and method, the duty is as binding as any other on minds penetrated with a sense of the evils mentioned. . . . I cannot think that in any fair and complete view of the matter the True is to give way to the False for fear of consequences. Perhaps the difference in our impressions arises from a difference in the scope of contemplation of the subject from the two sides. You look only at immediate results, and, as I think, make a mistake about them. I have accustomed myself to look far, far beyond, and to study consequences in their development. . . . Is it possible that you do not discern the change in the relations of theology and public sentiment? . . . Dr. Christlieb writes, in his *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*, on "The Present Breach between Culture and Christianity." Yes the "breach" certainly exists, though you have called it in question. Why, this "breach," this "conflict," is precisely the problem which earnest Christians who think as well as believe are struggling, as such men never struggled before, to solve so as to save their cherished faith from destruction. You can not put aside with a word of contempt the emblazoned characteristic of the age. It is not low and corrupt men, it is not eccentric or superficial men, it is not scoffers, that you have to meet

as the opponents of supernatural religion in our day; but men whom you will have to respect when you know them, and whom meanwhile you must not discredit yourself and your cause by misjudging, or by relying on slighting or opprobrious words to put them down. . . . You cannot suppose that I did not resort to the means and canvass the considerations you now bring forward. Of course I did so before settling in and avowing my present position. In speaking to the public, indeed, I have chiefly had regard to the intellectual part of my struggle, and have dwelt upon the aspects of the argument as they were gradually unfolded to me in the successive stages of the experience I record. The distinctively spiritual part of this same experience is both too delicate and too sacred to be treated in description at any length. At any rate, this is my feeling on the subject; and as the argument is full of importance, I have tried to state that clearly and let the case rest there. Even with you, hitherto, I have not been induced to depart from this method; and from your last communication there are remaining points of intellectual discussion between us which ought, it seems to me, to be attended to before any attempt at spiritual analysis can be in place. I will say to you at once, that I have made trial of the plan you esteem so highly. It is the plan of Pascal



and Montalembert among Catholics and their congeners, and, to take a modern instance that will be familiar to you, of Mr. Henry Rogers among Evangelical Christians. It is genuinely Christian, is acted on by multitudes, and is, I am sure, effective in a great proportion of cases. You would not recommend the masses and holy water, as Pascal does ; but you would advise the troubled soul to keep on saying it believed and praying to the Lord to help its unbelief. This is in principle Pascal's plan ; and the stupidity and concomitant faith do often ensue from it. Now I tried this plan of yours, with the advantage of Pascal's ramification (—and let me tell you, the masses and holy water are real helps, and strong ones too ; though, having no experience of them, you may not believe it); and in my case it failed as completely as I doubt not it has succeeded in many others. . . . I have spoken to you of the cause of the decline of religious persecution. I must now remind you that you ought to believe in witchcraft. I know that you cannot ; but you are all the worse Christian, though of course all the better man, for the impossibility. You ought to say that you believe, and pray to the Lord to help your unbelief ; for as John Wesley earnestly declared, to give up witchcraft is to give up the Bible. Blackstone finds the laws for the punishment of witches de-



rived from the Bible. You do not believe in witchcraft. But the Bible-writers believed in it; the Bible pages take its truth for granted, and set forth what you have bound yourself to call divine ordinances for its punishment. Our ancestors, who were thorough-going believers in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, believed of course in witchcraft, and made and executed bloody laws for its suppression. We call those laws relics of superstition and barbarism, and pity the witches. But if our religiosity and faith in the Bible were not much weakened, we could not do this, but we should have to retain the cruel laws and execute them as bloodily as ever; for the superstition and barbarism of which they were indeed relics were part and parcel of the Jewish Law, which Christianity declares to have been divine, and the precept of which was, *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live*. You say that the word may be translated poisoner instead of witch. Suppose it may: it will hardly do for you to save the credit of the Bible by telling people whom you hold bound to receive it as infallible and divine that it contains wrong words instead of right ones; but let that pass. You are fully aware that the question does not turn upon the passage in Exodus; but that both the Old Testament and the New assume as a matter of course the reality of such things as witchcraft,

sorcery, and diabolical possession ; and you must be supposed to agree with the Presbyterian doctor of divinity here who said in his pulpit a few days ago, as the newspaper informs me, that " God established himself as a ruler over Israel, and as such, furnished a model government for all after times." You see that our " after times " have departed from the " model " of the Scriptural past. Our godless legislation has repealed the laws against witchcraft. You ought to grieve for this ; but, backslider that you are, you don't grieve : you are as sure as I am that the repeal and the change in public sentiment that determined it are not a departure in the wrong direction ; but are a growth, an advance, a thing to be glad of without any shadow of doubt. I do not see how you can turn your mind fairly on the subject without further perceiving that the education and elevation of the public conscience in this matter were retarded by the stringent belief in Bible-inspiration ; and that it is in consequence of a decline of the theological spirit and a cooling of people's faith in the supernaturalness of the old teachings, that we are able to make the advance. Judged by this fruit, it is plain that the giving up of the doctrine of inspiration is a forward step and a blessing to the race. . . . Look again at your position in regard to Sunday. You have avowed as a settled principle, that no

ordinance can be rightfully insisted on as of divine obligation unless the obligation be proved from the Bible. Now you know quite well that there is no command in the Bible to keep Sunday; and that the statement in vogue among Protestants that the obligation of the Jewish Sabbath relating to a different day was transferred to Sunday is unsupported by a single text from beginning to end of the Scriptures. Yet in the face of this significant fact, which brands the practice itself with inconsistency, you loudly insist upon its *Scriptural* obligation, and denounce as wicked the non-observance of it by persons who refuse to follow your sectarian fashion. You speak of it as of the highest importance. I do not ask how your Sunday-school scholars can be made to believe, but I ask how you yourself can possibly believe, that an institution so binding and so important as you say this is, can have been left without a clear setting-forth and inculcation in the Bible, taking that to be the only Christian rule of faith. The Sabbath is expressly declared to be a sign *between the Lord and the children of Israel forever* (Ex. xxxi. 17). There is certainly no hint in the Old Testament of a change in the Sabbath Day; and any Jew who should have undertaken to keep Sunday instead of Saturday for the Sabbath would have incurred condemnation under the

Old-Testament law, and in its palmy days would have been put to death. In the New Testament there is no more mention than in the Old of a change from the seventh day to the first. We read of the disciples assembling for worship on the first day, as we know they did on other days. (See Mosheim and other ecclesiastical historians.) Christ declares that on the twin commandments of love to God and to man "hang all the law and the prophets"; and when he epitomises the commandments for the young rich man (Matt. xix. 18, 19), he says not a word of the Sabbath. The Sermon on the Mount, generally appealed to as the perfection of Christianity, makes no reference to any holy day. The meeting of the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, expressly convened to settle the obligations of Christians and their relations to the Jewish Law, the very occasion, it must be admitted, when such an obligation as that of the Sabbath would have been declared if it had existed as a part of the Christian order, is so far from recognising such a thing that it does not mention either Sabbath or Sunday, but plainly sets aside the earlier dispensation as no longer authoritative, in the words: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to

idols," &c.; the Sabbath, under any shape, not being among the "necessary things", or things inculcated at all by the Apostles, though later puritanism has darkened their counsel with such effect that you are now insisting on the church holy day as divine. Nowhere do we find the New-Testament writers teaching the holiness of any particular day, or specifying Sabbath-breaking among the sins to be avoided by their disciples. This fact is clearly not reconcilable with the scripturalness and binding character claimed for the festival among Bible Christians. You have read Neander, and you know the testimony of this learned and careful Christian authority, that "the celebration of Sunday, was always, like that of every festival, a human institution: far was it from the Apostles to treat it as a Divine command; far from them, and from the first apostolic church, to transfer the laws of the Sabbath to Sunday." Indeed, your reading must supply testimonies of this kind in abundance; and you have to face the fact, that the Evangelical notion on this subject (which carried out would, according to the warning in Gal. v. 3, make you "a debtor to the whole law") is not only against Apostolic preaching and practice, but is to this day not generally Christian, but only of British and North-American prevalence. It is clear enough that Sunday was from the first

an entirely distinct day from the Sabbath. Many of the early Jewish Christians, unwilling to break with their old habit, kept both days; showing that the obligation of one had not been transferred to the other. Sunday was not associated by the primitive disciples with Moses and Sinai, but was revered by them as the day of their Lord's resurrection; and only in much later times did it come to be popularly miscalled "the Sabbath," when sectaries had wrested a scriptural name for the weekly holiday, to make it a rallying point of opposition to the numerous festivals of the Church. The first Christians "rejoiced for the consolation" of their release from the yoke of the ceremonial observances of which the Sabbath was a part; but you American and British Protestants "tempt God", in the Apostle's language (Acts xv. 10), by renewing the yoke which the fathers found too hard to be borne. As if the tyrannical sabbatarianism of later times had been anticipated by the New-Testament authorities, from whom you have turned away to follow the Puritan innovation, we find in Rom. xiv. 4, 5, and Col. ii. 16, the most explicit condemnation and warning of it.

You know, my dear ———, that the Bible no more commands the observance of Sunday than of All Saints' or of Christmas.



.... The descent of man is a question of science; and if you talk about the intrinsic excellence of one or another view on the subject, it is manifestly better to believe with the leaders of scientific thought that man has risen, than to believe with the theologians, on their own poor and oft-refuted word, that he has fallen.

.... Darwinism, you think, supposes an unworthy origin for man in deriving him through an evolution of continually progressive forms; but you do not hesitate to derive all post-adamite humanity from a pattern of physical degeneracy and spiritual foulness wrought by the Devil. By how much is sinful generation nobler and better than sinless development? You are not shocked at the thought of springing from the dust, but are horrified to be the regular sequel of higher and higher grades of animal progression. But the contemplation of Nature's orderly unfoldings in the ascending scale should surely have an elevating rather than a depressing effect upon the mind. I am for my part penetrated with profoundest admiration and awe in view of the majestic law of Evolution, which in the ripeness of knowledge and reflection supersedes the "school-boy's tale" of artful contrivance by which theology pretends to explain the universe. Christianity does not explain it any more than Free Thought; and does not go so far as Free Thought



in increasing such rational conceptions of it as our limited faculties are capable of attaining. The Christian account "explains" the universe in the same way as the old account of the earth's resting on an elephant, or a tortoise, "explains" that matter: by assuming, that is, a string of arbitrary propositions, utterly unverifiable and full of intrinsic difficulties. If freethinkers would set up a scaffolding of theory, and speak from it in the manner of Christian dogmatism, they might in this way furnish an explanation of the universe that would be at least as authoritative and deserving the name as that which Christians boast of supplying. But it is better to be honest, and not to attempt any deceit on ourselves or others by pretending to offer an explanation where by the nature of the case none is or can be possible. To fret over the impossibility is like a child's crying for the moon. You understand now, I hope, that I do not reject your view because of the ultimate incomprehensibleness of what it proposes. I have given other reasons for my rejection, this one of them being quite sufficient in itself: that the view is not sustained by evidence, but grows weaker and weaker under each succeeding test. As long as this is the case, incomprehensibility is neither here nor there. If I am not to reject a thing because it is incomprehensible, neither am I to believe it

because it is incomprehensible. The want of omniscience or infallibility is not a peculiar defect of mine, but a universal human imperfection. The "men of old" whose dictum you deem it sin to question, were no more masters of the incomprehensible than you or I. You say in one place:—"It is vain to try to answer such questions." Very true. I do not complain of your not answering such questions. I complain rather that you will insist on answering them, and in such a manner. Modestly put, it is as a probability that you recommend your doctrine. But it is not a probability, greater or less. There is no probability that I can see about the doctrine you propose. It is altogether and in the highest degree improbable. It is but a skin-deep refinement of the older heathen mythology, whose fantastic unreality is so clear to us both; and your kingdom of Satan is worse than anything in the religion of the Greeks and Romans. The "testimony of the rocks" is in unceasing contradiction to the most carefully revised edition of the Church's tale of creation; and still more emphatic is the contradiction of reason and conscience in this day of light to the theosophic metaphysics that accompany the tale. Such things expose and doom the tradition of which they form a part.... When you set up a "scheme" of supernatural operations, and urge

it upon grounds of analogy and with other arguments addressed to the natural reason, you acknowledge the competency of reason to deal with the subject in this point of view, not as a pupil, but as a judge. Looking at it so, I ask you, would Absolute Goodness create with active poison-working elements for *any* end? . . . . Was God under compulsion to create man so? No: he was free, you say, to create or not to create; but man could not have been made otherwise compatibly with free will in the creature. Then it would seem creation should not have taken place, or free will should have been left out of the plan rather than evil accepted for its sake. What necessary Moloch is this Free Will, that is higher than goodness, better than happiness, and so mysteriously precious that evil must be adopted as a means to secure it, and goodness and happiness offered a divine sacrifice to it? This known world of ours so abounds in moral foulness, as well as in physical suffering of manifestly impeccable beings, such as little infants and irrational animals, that it negatives from the first your anthropomorphic theory of Creation and Providence; which is an apotheosis of human imperfection. Our reason cannot fathom the infinite Order of which we are a part; but surely, we are not therefore to lend our imaginations to monstrous hypotheses on the sub-

ject . . . . *Present wrong righted hereafter?* Righted by whom? Reparation is the act of an erring or imperfect being; an erring being who has done wrong, or an imperfect being who could not prevent it. The providence of an absolutely perfect Being would admit nothing that had to be atoned for or repaired at any point, present or future. That WRONG ONCE WAS must remain a fact for all eternity. Reparation may console the wronged; but it cannot undo the fact or change the nature of wrong itself, and so can be no vindication of the ruling Will you make the First Cause of all things. What is time but man's measure of a span of eternity? If God's intelligent plan of His universe embraced injustice for one moment of time, He would be an unjust God as really as if He made injustice the rule of eternity. . . . To consider God as subjected to the exigencies of a purpose, is not to glorify Him, but the contrary; and you violate your own conception of God when you say that He was so needy that He had to take in evil (no matter how partial) as a part of His plan. You really do not rise above humanity in your religious ideas. Your God is a magnified man, with goodness for his attribute, yet doing equivocal acts, and struggling with evil, which, in the shape of sin and suffering, he is never to destroy; for your Hell is as everlasting as your Heaven.

Your Devil likewise is a magnified man, with malignity for his attribute, and enjoying an indefinite lease of power and preternatural means of carrying out his wicked designs. Your melancholy compromise of "atonement" and "salvation" is analogous to a bankruptcy act which favours a pitiful per cent out of a race of impecunious debtors. It is throughout a dream of distorted human relations. You apply the terms Perfect and Almighty to a conception of a mobile Being, moved by, as well as operating on, man; the latter's will being free from origination or control by his Maker; the Creator waiting on the yet-unborn volitions of His creature. This Deity is further a great Schemer, wrapped up in a plan which He pursues at all hazards and cost to mankind; embracing the before-described libertinage, with consequent difficult salvation of a part of the race and ready damnation of the rest. He is All-benevolent, All-wise, All-powerful, you say; and He is the Author and Providential Ruler of a present world abounding in physical and moral evil, and the Monarch of a future world where sin and misery are to be as eternal as sanctity and happiness. Forgive me if I am not able to believe these things, nor to discover in them any approach to a happy solution of the Mystery of the Universe. Forgive me if I cannot call this gospel of yours

a revelation of glad tidings; if I cannot admit its right to defy reason and retreat from argument with the cry of "a divine mystery." Remember all the time that I do not impugn the actual order of the Universe, but only men's theory concerning it; which is a very different thing. I can and do bow in the presence of the Incomprehensible; but it is another thing to pay this homage to a definite conception of men's minds on the subject, however hoary a tradition it may be, however sanctioned by the faith of multitudes and the authority of ecclesiastical bodies. These claims the other religions have as well as yours; and you do not allow them the shelter of "divine mystery," but judge them by reason and condemn them without appeal. Reason properly deals with logical statements; and you have invited it to do so in this case. The result is, that I abide in the conviction reached by me so far back, and prefer to keep with the increasing company of the wise and prudent, from whom you think the most precious pearls of truth are hid. Let me have my choice. And if it must continue to seem to you that this matter of Christianity is indeed so exceptional that in it alone the swallow of babes and sucklings is to be preferred as a gauge of truth, have your choice; but let us love each other still. Obedience to conscience begets peace and satisfaction.

This is true of you, of me, and of all men besides. You are bound to be a Christian, and I am bound not to be one ; and neither of us can violate his conscience and be blessed.



## FROM A LETTER TO A LIBERAL CHRISTIAN.

.....

....I am bound to testify to the excellence and brightness of the "New Faith"; which many who are too clearsighted and just to call it wicked still habitually describe as dark and unwholesome. They do not know it who call it so.

....Happily, you agree with me as to the fallacy of terrifying people into good lives by appeals to their imaginations in relation to "the other world." Whatever temporary effect may be produced in particular cases by a demonstration of this kind upon the nerves, no real virtue of character can proceed from it; and apart from the low morality of inculcating superstition for *any* end, the practical mischiefs of the resort we are looking at are too clear to both of us to need any discussion. The backward natures you speak of are matched with the backward morality of the theological teaching. If the "scheme of salvation" be in any of its elements a real help to them, they lose nothing by the advance of others

to a higher ground. The New Faith is not for them. They will not, cannot, have it; and so they cannot, in any point of view, suffer from its not invoking their cupidity and fears in regard to another life.... To give the name of revelation to the cryptology which Christians have been wrangling over these hundreds of years, is to abuse language and mislead thought on the subject. You should not blame me for judging Christianity as I judge other things. My dear friend, there can never be any fair reasoning or just conclusions on the subject till this method is accepted as the right way of dealing with it. Christianity is not that vague, intangible, spiritual essence which its advocates claim that it is to save it from reproach. It is an historical fact, embodied in visible institutions, performing responsible acts, having a record and annals which cannot be evaded, and which it is not fair to refuse to face. This is where I am obliged to make a point against its pleaders. They accept and proclaim all that is good in its history, and claim credit for it on that account; and they deny or explain away the bad part, though that is just as indubitable, and equally characteristic of the system. Every other system than their own religion they take as a whole and judge as a whole; but only a part of Christianity is allowed to be Christian: the other part is shuffled off upon hu-

man nature, and Christianity exonerated from its proper responsibility for it. In this way, any other system may as well as Christianity be clothed with a snowy righteousness and made out to be "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing"; but Christians stoutly refuse to allow such pleading in favour of any other system than their own. They loudly reproach other religions with the evils that history shows those religions to have produced; but the evils—the crimes and horrors—which the same immortal witness places to the account of Christianity, they set aside as of no effect to prove what they would prove in any other case. I was not able to follow this crooked course; and so I could not be a Christian. . . . Your improved Christianity is not Christianity proper. It is no doubt a phase, and an important phase, to be considered before the end of the argument is reached; and you will see that I shall consider it: but Christianity is a great historical fact, which cannot be summed up in any of its modern dilutions. What should you think of one who chose for his theme Medicine, and then went on to resolve it, in its "method," and "secret," and "sweet reasonableness," into—Homœopathy? Christianity must be weighed in a fair balance, as other systems are. We judge them by their fruits. We do not place their bad fruits to the account of something

else, while counting their good fruits as a testimony in their favour : neither are we to do this in regard to Christianity. The lubrication of it by Liberal as well as by Orthodox Christian advocates, with a view to its slipping out of the grasp of fair examination, will not do. But you and I shall hardly be far apart at last, in this aspect of the case ; for under your tritulating interpretations Christianity is so surely melting out of its historical integuments as to be liker and liker to that pure naturalism on which I used to rally our noble-hearted friend the late Gerrit Smith, and tell him that his patent "Extract" would suit me nearly as well as the strong German "Essence" of Ludwig Feuerbach.

.... Of all the half-dozen lives of Jesus with which I am acquainted, considered as biographies, the one by Dr. Furness pleases me most. Certainly Strauss's work is unapproachably the greatest of them all ; but it is as a critique of the gospels and of supernaturalism that it takes this rank : it is no biography. Renan is acute, eloquent, entertaining ; but he is more of the dancer than of the marcher or the explorer, and exhausts himself, it seems to me, in breaking flies upon the wheel, without bringing to light any facts that we want to get hold of. There are few of his class of rhetoricians that I can rise from without an unpleasant sense of having been

fed upon froth. Renan's *Vie* will not, in my estimation, bear comparison with either the *Leben* by Strauss or the "English Life" furnished us by Mr. Thomas Scott: and as I should send one interested in English literature to Chambers' Encyclopædia in preference to the elaborate work of M. Taine, so should I recommend Dr. Furness's little book as more helpful reading on its subject than the volumes of the clever Frenchman who has electrotyped primitive Christianity. But none of the life-writers help us to know Jesus, I think. There can be no real biography of a being who has been worshipped as a god for hundreds of years, and who, while his reality continues to be insisted on, will retain his godship still. You Liberal Christians can make as *liberal* assumptions as the Orthodox themselves, when your affectionate purpose requires it; and you with your hyper-dulia, as really worship as a god him whom Scripture puts "a little lower than the angels," as the Orthodox with their latria, who denounce you for not going to their length of worshipping him as *the* God. No trustworthy biography can be written of a supposed divine being, concerning whose mortal career no sure data remain to us. There is nothing but the gospels to go to for Jesus's life; and they, of unknown origin, teeming with incredible stories, and disclosing the plainest evi-

dences of the ignorance, disagreement, and uncertainty of their writers, are indeed a *lucus a non lucendo*, the shadows of which only the purblind vision of a predetermined faith can mistake for light and clearness. A biography culled from the canon is as historically valuable as a miniature copied from Veronica's handkerchief. I have no doubt that the very first Christians were, as you say, unitarians; but the gradual deification of Christ began very early, though it took more than three hundred years to elaborate the doctrine into its Nicene and post-Nicene proportions. I think we may find the seed of the modern tenet even in the genuine epistles of Paul; though the great Apostle was neither homoousian nor homoiousian, and was in no danger himself of confounding the *one God* and the *one Lord* whom he so distinctively indicates. As the Catholics used to say that Erasmus laid the egg and Luther hatched it, so we may say that Paul and his age broke ground for later and unapostolic Christianity to build on. There is a genesis of doctrines as well as of worlds. Greek thought, impregnating the new offshoot of Judaism, produced the Trinity, as it had before produced the gods of Olympus. Arius was a refiner and subtiliser after the Greek fashion no less than Athanasius. The one God of Israel (also a growth, to be traced in the Old Testament) could not



satisfy the former any more than the latter ; and three centuries of Christian speculation had so wrought upon the primitive unitarianism that it was no party at all when Constantine assembled his theologians at Nice. It was scarcely a hard thing then, though it might be an impossible thing now, to bind men to the worship of one special individual son of man as their God. At Constantinople, at Ephesus, at Chalcedon, nail after nail was driven home and the doctrine firmly fastened on the Church. There was a readiness then for such results that we can but faintly conceive of now. When the Council of Ephesus secured to Mary her title of Theotokos, "Mother of God," the streets rang with popular rejoicings. We can hardly enter into the temper of those times and of that Ephesian multitude, or we should wonder less at the developments of Christian dogma. The beginning was easy and the progress sure. Original Christianity grew into the religion of the Middle Ages, when faith and miracle abounded still, and the corporeal descent of Deity was a daily event. That the Christian was making an exchange of worlds, giving up this world and the natural life thereof as the price demanded for another world and the supernatural life belonging to it, was the accepted view. Poverty and pain were blessed states ; and hence, to dread and avoid poverty



and pain was irreligious ; to labour against them, except in temporary works of mercy *done for God's sake, not man's*, was to fly in the face of Heaven. The existing order, with its inequalities, its squalidity, oppression, and sorrowful conditions of all kinds, was to be permanent, was the abiding order for this world. Men, as their Christian duty, were to be contented with it for the dispensation of time, and to look for improvement not to reforms here, but to deliverance by death, which was the passage to a supernatural existence. This was the old and genuine Christian belief ; and the festering ills of the libelled world went on in sacred hopelessness while it flourished. But the Dark Ages and the genuine Christian belief that suited them had to pass away. Original Christianity was ground to powder long ago. We have a modern rationalised thing intended to combine the advantages of both worlds ; and we call it Christianity ; but the Christianity of Christ, or of the apostolic Christians, it is not. I do not see how, taking the only accounts we can turn to on the subject, you are able to avoid the conclusion that Jesus was an ascetic and the teacher of asceticism ; nor can I quite agree with you that " the partialists vainly build upon his figures of speech." Though the orientalisms of the gospels render all such interpretations extremely uncertain, yet we

know, as to this matter, that the monstrous doctrine from which you would exonerate Jesus did prevail among the Jews after the captivity; and it is not probable that a popular exhorter such as Jesus is described to have been, was superior to the vulgar faith on this point, or neglected so obvious a means of enforcing his appeals to the common imagination. I believe, indeed, that little can now be said in support of retaining as genuine what follows verse 8 to make up the last chapter of Mark in our Testament; but if we keep enough of the remaining accounts to furnish forth any tolerable picture of their hero, the difficulty remains in full force. But you and I are really turned in different directions on this topic. A being for me to venerate and love, especially one for me to imitate, must stand before me in more definite outline than Jesus stands. The Jesus of faith and fable I cannot believe in, and of course can ground nothing on him. The Jesus of history is much too dim and uncertain a personage to fill the place of the former, or to supersede better known exemplars in my regard. . . . Shall you call me an Hegelian if I say that it seems to me pure theism and pure atheism run into one at last? Think how bent on not being pure theists or pure atheists men almost universally are! Everybody must have his say about final causes; and everybody's ex-

planation is demonstrated to himself by the unsatisfactoriness of his neighbour's. I was told of God and Religion in my childhood: I studied men's thoughts and utterances on the subject, and what a Library of Romance they turned out to be! God had long been in the hands of chosen people, who had caged him like a singing-bird; and I had to find him in the cage, or woe was to me. One page out of the book of the starry heavens put the whole Library of Romance to flight. When I learned of the infinitude of suns and systems, with all their attendant phenomena, that blaze into and out of existence through the incomputable eternity, when I felt the chain of necessary uncalculating sequence running through nature, and then turned again to the religious explanation, I saw that the Christian stories to account for it all were as sheer mythology as any of the others. And it has always seemed to me since, that the great error is to pretend to any ability at all to deal in the way of opinion with what my friend Mr. Abbot, for instance (see *The Radical*, June 1867, p. 596), calls "The Mystery of Mysteries" even while he declares that he clothes it with "the highest, not the lowest," that he knows. Why, the Mystery is as infinitely above "the highest" as it is above "the lowest" that man knows, or by possibility can know. The distinc-

tion between high and low is wasted here ; and this is the mistake our speculative reasoners are continually making—Mr. Herbert Spencer takes note of it in his *First Principles*. They will have you attribute *something* to the Absolutely Inconceivable ; and if they do not find you attributing your highest, they at once infer that you are attributing your lowest ; while in reality, there is no choice or alternative of high or low whatever. What if the personal and the impersonal, the conscious and the unconscious, exhaust *our* categories ? It does not follow that they exhaust Absolute Being. *Conscious, unconscious, &c.*, are terms which express states of existence that are conceivable by us : they have no pertinent application to the Inconceivable. The reviewer that I have read over again at your recommendation flounders like the others on this track. He considers “ whether a creature of such limited capacities as man can be correctly said to possess anything in common with the Author of Nature ” ; and says that “ the doubt is dispelled when we take up the antithesis of the proposition, and try to suppose the Author of Nature as possessing *nothing* in common with man. It is obvious,” he adds, “ that in such a case our idea of God would be that of an imperfect being.” The cardinal vice of all such pleading as this lies in the fancy that we may

indulge any suppositions whatever about "the Author of Nature." Nature incloses us, as the infinite incloses the finite. We can never get out of Nature, try how we may; and so can never reach any ground or being outside of Nature, so as to have an extranatural subject for discussion or speculation. We may indeed call up a shrivelled abstract nature before the mind's eye, and imagine a further external existence, like or unlike ourselves, as the author of it: but this abstraction is not Nature in reality. *That* surpasses in its vastness the utmost range of our faculties, is boundless to our conception, and lays bare no central core or heart that we may dissect in quest of origin or maker. The reviewer is blinded all the time with the dream-form of a Person outside of Nature, about whose characteristics we are to bandy suppositions, and determine his likeness or unlikeness to a microscopic speck within Nature of which we are cognisant and conscious. Any "idea of God" must "be that of an imperfect being": a perfect being can be no subject of the formative imagination; and an "idea of God" that tries him by man as a model is no more just or reverent than one that should fashion him in the likeness of the lion. Attraction and repulsion are both in Nature; but a loving God would be as really an imperfect being (though not in the same unamiable aspect)

as a hating God : and while both love and hate are predicated of the gods of all the religions, a tranquil, candid observation of the universe, if it discover any hint of primal causality, is pointed to a perfection so high above all the qualified entanglements of the human imagination, and in such ineffable remove from the divinity that spider-like man spins out of his own bowels, as to make *law* but a poor groping term which is good only to save us from the impiety of conscious fetishism. A multitude of minds at this point of time have come to see the folly and mischief of talking about *will* and *person* here, and can not with fidelity to conscience go on with it any longer. Do you not perceive that any kind of personality is limitation ? and do you not see that every attempt to rest the mind in a teleology results in the same fatal animism which you call superstition in the earlier and contemporary religions outside of Christianity ? It is clear to me that all deifying of the inscrutable Power by making man, or the qualities of human nature, the standard for its characterisation is but child's-play and delusion. The one Divine Person that you rest with, easily becomes three, or thousands, in the coiling or uncoiling of various metaphysics. The Trinitarian is no more conscious of superstition in his god-making than you are in yours ; and the *punctum saliens* of the superstition is



really not in making the Trinity out of the Personal God, as he does ; but in making the Personal God out of man to start with, as you do equally with him. The pattern once allowed, you cannot limit your neighbour in his cutting out from it. You think with the reviewer that the Universe must come from a Person or from Chance. I have already intimated that we can have no legitimate opinion about any *coming* of the Universe. I will further remark, that we do not *infer* the Universe from knowledge of a universe-producing cause. The Universe is a fact. We have it, we know it, and *we do not know it as an effect*. Nor must an arbitrary definition of Chance be allowed to hamper the argument. Chance is not the mere negation of personal design, but essentially the conception of lawlessness. There is undoubtedly a principle of order in Nature ; and this excludes chance. The persistive blunder of theists on this subject proceeds partly from the convenience of setting up Chance to be bowled over ; but more, perhaps, from the rage for definition. The nearest that I dare come to definition—and this is forced upon me by the course of the other side—is to say that I cannot think of the inscrutable Power as personal or designing, or as being Mind, or anything else that we can conceive of. To regard it as Mind, is to turn back in the direction of heathen



mythology ; and to my thought, the Jewish fables of Elohim and Jehovah, and the Christian fables of God and Christ, are obviously akin to the figments which the Hindoos and Greeks and other "uncovenanted" peoples have indulged about their deities ; all wandering and groping together in the vain attempt to dispose of the unsolvable Problem of the Universe. As soon as you have outlined God as a person, you begin to weave personal incidents about him. The name, "Jehovah, Jove, or Lord," matters little : the same course is run, more or less conspicuously, in all the instances. The drama is made and played, the scene-shifting goes on, the very stock-phrases are repeated after hundreds of years ;—and the mischievous lesson always follows. What falsities and horrors "the will of God" has sanctified in even good men's eyes, and what wrongs and abominations are still covered and perpetuated by the use of such handy shibboleths, you know as well as I. I agree with the reviewer that praise and blame, reward and punishment, are applicable to man ; and for the very reason that he is, so to speak, the creature of circumstances : and I agree as heartily with Mr. Atkinson, that man is not properly the subject of anything of the kind *in the theological sense*. Thus I do not believe in revenge, or in vindictive penalties. These belong to the theological spirit, and are kept up by

its prevalence. Man is a moral agent, since he has a moral sense and moral impulses, which play the part of factors in his conduct and destiny. He is responsible to his fellows, to the community in which he lives, to the world of which he is a part: and out of this responsibility arises the rightfulness of laws, which affect conduct by supplying motives for its regulation. . . . Orthodoxy involves a daily strain upon good sense and good feeling. Your Liberalism lessens the strain in its degree, but leaves too much for my endurance. The faults of the "design" in its physical aspect are as nothing in comparison with its horrors from a moral point of view. On this ground I could not continue to stand with the Liberal theists after my enforced departure from Orthodoxy. The latter tells of an elaborate Divine preparation for a world of sinlessness and happiness, which was not to be. The plan was to be disconcerted, overturned in a moment; and yet it was the plan of a Being who knew, and foreknew, all things! Then it introduces the fallen angel Lucifer, our Devil; as if *he* explained anything, or as if man were not a self-working devil enough in himself, under the dispensation of evil which God had given to the world. The mere profession of such a belief involves denial of all the sound maxims of our daily life; and if its professors acted it out in

their practice, we should have pandemonium indeed. But they do not act it out, any more than Liberal theists act out what they retain of the tradition of the evil-willing, or evil-accepting, God that they insist on as absolute external Cause, in preference to admitting the wholesome truth, that the subject is as infinitely out of the reach of our minds as the stars are beyond the touch of our stretched-out fingers. I could not hold a doctrine that had to be suppressed and contradicted in this way. The necessity of the suppression and contradiction was fatal to it as soon as I saw how the case stood. A doctrine *above* reason would be no doctrine for us. Only by the application of reason to a doctrine are we able to receive it as a fact of science or of revelation. A doctrine is a truth, or a supposed truth, formularised; that is, put into a shape to be grasped by reason. Here is a doctrine not *above* reason, but *against* reason. When Liberal theists have swept away a few ecclesiastical additions from this dreadful corner-stone, they actually fancy they have prepared for mankind a firm foundation for religious faith, a Being to love and worship and trust in, a hope and expectation of another life! I tell you, even the best elements of my religiosity turn me from this position of Liberals as compulsorily as from Calvinism itself. Indeed it would seem to involve the

same negation of the trustworthiness of our moral instincts as Calvinism involves. The acceptance of evil by Divine Will is the fatal blot. Whether you make it means or end, it is the same. Channing's *Moral Argument against Calvinism* reaches farther than its author (probably) ever intended. The primal conception of theology is personification of the inscrutable Force. The perception of the Inscrutable is a distinct thing from this primal conception, though often confounded with it. I know your attempts at reforming the primal conception. Time was when I eagerly caught at such pleadings as Mr. Newman and Miss Cobbe, who stand high in my esteem, are still putting forth. They are clever, and reflect the power as well as the benevolence of their authors' minds; but they leave the vexed question just where they find it. Men who yet believe that the solar system waited on the military operations of Joshua and his Jewish host may continue to confess a Perfectly Good and Omnipotent Author of Evil; but other theists come one by one to admit the limitation of either goodness or power in the Deity. The admission is compelled, and it is fatal. They begin by seating a human semblance on a throne infinitely above the universe: they end by levelling the throne to finite dust.

## A NOVEL WITH A PURPOSE.

*Beulah* is a lumbering story of 510 pages, which might as appropriately, and perhaps as euphoniously, have been entitled "Adoption," from the unnatural profusion of adopted children out of one orphan asylum which it presents. *Beulah* is a homeless girl, with colourless visage, and "a pair of large grey eyes set beneath an overhanging forehead," which is also "a boldly-projecting forehead, broad and smooth." She has intellectual tendencies, a proud, passionate nature, tremendous obstinacy, and a blunt way of speaking. With these characteristics she goes out into the world and encounters an incredible amount of brutality from people belonging to the upper classes of society. In a moment of insensibility from mental anguish and the beginning of a brain fever, she is picked up by a childless man, possessed of wealth, generosity and a cultivated mind; who takes her to his house to live there as his adopted daughter. Upon her arrival, her benefactor's sister casts the evil eye upon her, drinks her medicine that she

may not be cured, and is moved to great bitterness of feeling when she gets well in spite of all that could be done to prevent it. The proud and high-tempered Beulah will not stay comfortably adopted, but after a flare-up with the sister turns her back upon the house of her generous protector, and without a word of explanation or farewell quits him, as she believes forever, and returns in her old clothes to the orphan asylum. He goes after her, having found out the truth from a servant, and prevails over her resolution of independence so far, that she consents to live in his house while she pursues her studies at the common-school. She graduates with the highest honours, takes a teacher's place to support herself, goes to live at a cheap boarding-house, and writes philosophical essays for the local magazine. Working hard all day and reading all night, with nursing fever patients for a holiday relaxation, would infallibly bring a woman in real life to the brink of the grave at least; but Beulah only has a fever without going to bed for it, and lives on to be inconsolably wretched because her psychological writers fail to supply her with a satisfactory answer to Pilate's question—"What is Truth?" This is the burden of the book: philosophy vain, Christianity true and satisfying the needs of the human spirit. Beulah's reading and reflection had brought her to



the rejection of Christianity as a supernatural revelation ; and finding that the philosophers are unable to solve the problem of man's origin and destiny, she grows heartsick and despairing. Towards the end she is presented to us as having become a devout Christian believer ; not, it would appear, through any confutation of the arguments which had seemed to her to lie against the system of dogmatic religion, but from disgust with the metaphysicians and the craving of her heart for repose beneath the shadow of an oracle. It is no small comfort to the reader, in taking leave of her on the five-hundred-and-tenth page, to know that she is happily delivered from the mazes of psychology and ontology in which she has wandered so painfully and so long ; and that her cravings are appeased not only with a religion, but with the destined husband also. Indeed, one may well doubt from the story itself whether her protracted anguish of mind proceeded more from the unsatisfactoriness of pantheism or the separation from her guardian. Dr. Heartwell returns after his five years' roaming, finds Beulah at the top of the house playing the melodeon, pops the question in a somewhat arbitrary manner, and is then and there straightway accepted, much to his satisfaction, to hers, and, as has been intimated, to the reader's also. The author is so much wrapped up in her heroine that, notwith-



standing her views of the indispensableness of faith to happiness in this life and salvation in another, she does not take time to convert the other prominent characters who, according to her view, have erred and strayed from the way like lost sheep; but only holds out the hope that Dr. Asbury may at length be brought into the fold through Butler's Analogy and the still more powerful pleadings of a good wife; while Heartwell himself, the hero, if the book have a hero, is infidel still at the last accounts, though, we are to understand, in a hopeful condition from the constant presence of Beulah at his side.

Notwithstanding the time and pains which have evidently been bestowed on this work, the writer has completely failed to enter into the mind of the sceptic, and to grasp and understand the real difficulties, negative and positive, with which that mind is beset from the start, and through which it labours, well or ill, to the end of its course. Beulah is a fancy sketch; not without verisimilitude certainly, but very, very unreal. Poverty, thwarted love, and the working of these upon a morbid pride and sensitiveness, played an important part in the trials of mind under which Beulah was so near sinking. This is what happens in most actual cases: that is, other and various elements unite with and influence the conditions and results of the most

earnest speculative inquiry. Faith is a matter of physiology and education. It has, of course, its dialectical side also; and as to this, it was wisdom in our writer to jump the attempt to establish its pretensions by any regular argument. The changes of life, the climacterics, as they are called, have an important relation to this subject. Many minds have a special affinity towards dogmatic systems early in life, and are quite incapable of religious faith at a later period; while others are necessarily sceptical and unbelieving till long years have rolled by and the atoms of their bodies have been many times renewed; when the opposite conversion is as mysteriously wrought in them. The circumstances of each one's daily existence enter unfailingly into character, conduct, and habits of thought. In this light, some phases of Beulah are natural enough. But that a strong intellect, joined to a resolute will and an active working benevolence, as in this case, should flounder so miserably is, be it repeated, very unreal. "I want to know whether I have ever lived before; whether there is not an anterior life of my soul, of which I get occasional glimpses, and the memory of which haunts and disquiets me." (P. 321.) These are subtle, curious questions, which may possess attraction and interest for a certain class of thinkers; but what healthy mind would re-

main permanently disquieted for want of the impossible solution? It is certain that Christianity no more answers such questions than does any system of unbelief; and if one finds repose from them through embracing the former, it must be by dropping them at once, or reducing them to their proper level of unprofitable puzzles; a course which is not less open to the sceptic than to the believer. "Life is real, life is earnest." This is not matter of faith, but of positive knowledge. The duties of life, each one's duties, are clear, plain things enough, if there be no turning away of the mind, no idle dreaming when work is to be done; and happiness, in the usual order of nature, waits on the performance of duty. Such a case as Beulah's would be one of disease. Doubtless, the desire and pursuit of truth are natural to the healthy mind; nor are they vain, nor their legitimate results a mockery. Knowledge may be acquired by man, though not all knowledge. Beulah longed for "'knowledge of the deep things of philosophy, the hidden wonders of the universe, the awful mysteries of the shadowy spirit realm.'" (P. 323.) She would have been satisfied with nothing less than omniscience. One thing that Dr. Heartwell said to her was very much to the point:—"How can the finite soul cope with Infinite Being?"—but she only saw in it a fling at human philosophy.

Another unreal character in the book is Cornelia Graham. Cornelia, somewhat strong-minded and therefore a sceptic, is dying of heart disease. Concerning her, the pious Mrs. Williams speaks thus: "‘She has lived only for this world and its pleasures. Is she afraid of the world to come? Can she die peacefully?’" Beulah replies: "‘She will die calmly, but not hopefully. She does not believe in Christianity.’" From the account given of Cornelia it is impossible to say whether she had deserved Mrs. Williams’s description of her or not. If she had indeed lived only for pleasure, negligent of duty, and turning away from goodness to the end of her life, it was not to be expected that that end would be peaceful and happy. Death is commonly the echo of life; and, as conscience can never be completely extinguished in any one, so if life have been wasted and profaned, death must needs be troubled and unholy. An unhappy life, too, will in many cases close darkly and gloomily; though often, again, the sense of the relief at hand, the welcome deliverance from wrong and pain and growing burdens, will avail to soothe and cheer the parting soul with a wondrous consolation. We have known Cornelia as the spoiled child and disappointed woman; for it may be gathered from the narrative that the proud daughter of the Grahams had cherished

for Eugene more than a sister's love. Beulah, who knew how her life had been soured, could not expect it to exhale in sweetness at the close. She has confidence enough in her friend's nerves to predict that the approaching death will be calm; but, to carry out the notions and aims of the book, she is made to add very positively that poor Cornelia will not die hopefully, on account of not believing in Christianity. The other influences, it will be seen, are put out of sight: it is the absence of Christian faith that is to make the death-bed so sad and hopeless. Now it is just here that I object to the character of Cornelia as unreal. The writer has undertaken to construct an argument for Christianity from the picture of a death-bed without it. The character of Cornelia is carefully shaped to suit the design. It seems to be drawn for a vigorous intellect and good heart pining for the spiritual sustenance which Christianity alone can supply. Not to speak of exceptional instances, but proceeding under the general law of human nature, we may take the ground that a real Cornelia would not have pined thus, would not have lived unhappily and died hopelessly, as here represented. The very statement given at page 377 of the motives influencing the supposititious Cornelia to reject Christianity is not characteristic of a highly intelligent and conscientious woman. Doubtless,

it is most soothing to natural sensibility, other things being equal, to die in the faith of one's fathers, to be in sympathy with loved ones and with such as minister at the dying pillow. This of course is independent of the truth or falsity of particular creeds, and is as applicable to the death-bed of a Mohammedan as of a Christian. But as to this matter of hopefulness:—the most beautiful hope of all is that which inspires the unselfish soul for friends and brethren, for fellow-creatures and the universe of God. The selfish hope of heavenly enjoyments in another life may be held too without Christianity. Surely, the flaming Hell of Christian theology is not needed to bring *hope* to the bedside of the dying. Much more of terror than of hope lies in the creeds of the churches. "Evangelical" teachings are certainly not "glad tidings of great joy"; and "salvation," in the technical sense, is a most improbable thing to be attained to by the best of mankind. From two passages in the book under consideration, it may be suspected that the writer is not purely Evangelical, but leans to the Universalist heresy. Clara says (page 351),—"My faith teaches that the evil you so bitterly deprecate is not eternal, shall finally be crushed, and the harmony you crave pervade all realms.'" This is hopeful, certainly; but it is not a fair representative specimen of Christian faith. The



other passage (pp. 393-4) concerns the fate of Cornelia: "Cornelia had not believed: was she utterly lost? Beulah asked herself this question, and shrank from the answer." Unreality again. Beulah, be it remembered, is a person of strong understanding with good moral instincts. Such a person could have scarcely a moment's struggle with such a question; and if it were oftener asked of themselves by clear-minded, good-hearted men and women yet in the meshes of Athanasian tradition, the monstrous superstition from which it springs would crumble even faster than we see it crumbling now. As it is, nobody believes in hell for his relations and friends. It is a rod in soak for strangers, and the incorrigible world whose room will be so much better than their company when we are snugly settled with our acquaintances in heaven. The shrinking is when we first ask ourselves if we really do believe any longer in the time-honoured doctrine which we imbibed with our mothers' milk, and which we have been so impressively taught if any one reject he shall without doubt perish everlastingly. We do not shrink from an evasion of the doctrine's application in any particular case that falls under our observation. That *Beulah's* author has dared to put the query into shape, repeating it vehemently on a succeeding page, indicates that she



seriously doubts, if she has not already rejected, the dogma of Endless Misery.

On the last page (as elsewhere) this view is taken of the sceptic: “‘You turn from Revelation because it contains some things you cannot comprehend; yet you plunge into a deeper, darker mystery when you embrace the theory of an eternal, self-existing universe, having no intelligent creator, yet constantly creating intelligent beings. Sir, can you understand how matter creates mind?’” This is a misconception. The sceptic rejects what purports to be a Revelation through Christ or Mohammed or any other teacher, not because it contains some things which he cannot comprehend, but because the grounds on which it challenges his acceptance do not seem to him to be solid grounds; in other words, because it does not seem to him to be a genuine Revelation. In like manner, he does not set up any counter dogmatic system of the Universe as a parallel to the rejected Revelation. He does not, like the Christian, lay down propositions in unsearchable things. That matter and mind exist is not a theory of his, but a self-evident, admitted fact. That the processes of Nature follow a certain Order, or Law, is so clear, simple, and inevitable a deduction of reason, that it is equally a matter of positive science, and removed from the category of speculative

systems. These *principia* are common to believer and unbeliever alike; the former holding them not by faith, as supernaturally revealed, but by knowledge, as the unbeliever holds them. The essential difference between the two is, that the unbeliever stops here, with what is known, admitting his ignorance of final causes, and refusing to dogmatise, whatever he may conjecture, concerning that of which he knows nothing; while the believer refuses to be satisfied with the facts of consciousness and experience, and what may be tested by human reason; and, going beyond these, propounds a formal teleology, and lays claim to supernatural information in transcendental things. This, the essential difference between the two parties, is what such writers as the author of *Beulah* are continually losing sight of. Of course unbelievers have their own speculative opinions as well as believers their religious doctrines, concerning the unknown; and it is conceivable that errors and absurdities may find a place in the one as well as in the other. This however is always to be noted to the credit of the infidel side: that its opinions are not laid down as the utterances of an infallible oracle, which it is a sin to controvert. To the question, “Can you understand how matter creates mind?” the husband is not allowed to make any answer. “He seemed pondering her words,”

says the book. Yet the answer to them is ready and full. Let us suppose Dr. Heartwell to make it as follows: I do not pretend to understand how matter creates mind. I do not affirm that matter does create mind; and if it does, I freely confess that the *how* is beyond my comprehension. Of creation, in the sense of making something out of nothing, I have no conception whatever: it is to me inconceivable. That mind may be the phenomenal product of certain material conditions I find no difficulty in believing, remembering that the harmonies and discords of sound are in this way evolved as the result of particular mechanical acts and arrangements which, in their order of sequences, I can trace but a very little way. On my window-sill I place tightened strings: the air, blowing "where it listeth," touches presently these strings as if with human finger: further perturbations ensue in the mysterious ether, which quickly reach my ear, and, through that portal, my brain; when I enjoy the music of the eolian harp. "Can you understand how matter creates"—music? The perception of sound is equally a part of the mind with thinking. Sound is as wonderful and as incomprehensible as thought. For aught I know, thought may be "created" by matter as well as sound. As to the theory you ascribe to me of an eternal self-existing Universe, I am at least in

no worse dilemma with it than you are with your theory of an eternal self-existing Deity; and you have no more right to require me to give up my view of the Universe because I cannot explain the Universe, than I have to require you to give up your hypothesis of God because you cannot explain God. The Universe is a fact; God (in your sense) is an inference. I am not able to discover any origin for the Universe, and so I stop here, seeing neither necessity nor probability for any inference beyond. If I may not believe in an uncreated Universe, then neither may you believe in an uncreated Personal Designer of the Universe. I do not feel under any necessity of accounting for the existence of the Universe. To attempt to account for it by supposing an external cause, would commit me to an endless round of hypotheses; since for the Cause of the Universe would have to be supposed another Cause, and so on, *ad infinitum*. You no more solve the ontological problem than I solve it: you only remove the question a step farther. Besides that your hypothesis fails to solve the problem, it is furthermore beset with grave intellectual and moral difficulties. I am obliged to reject it. I do not feel unhappy or in way the worse in consequence of rejecting it. On the contrary, I feel freer and better than when I held it. The tendency to suppose supernatural

causes for what we cannot understand becomes weaker and weaker as we grow and learn. This is true of individuals and of the race. The remedy for fanaticism (from the Greek *φαινομαι*) is the cultivation of a healthy mind in a healthy body.

Let us hope that if there shall be a Beulah-Heartwell case in reality, the husband will give this answer to his wife. It may open her eyes and relieve her heart at the same time; and in the light of it she may find her true deliverance from the "deeper, darker mystery" which she jumped at Christianity to escape. Deep indeed is the mystery of the Universe; yet the darkness which broods over those awful depths wears no blackness of horror to the philosophic mind. That mind sees no immortal Devil ambushed there, clothed with superhuman power, animated by eternal hate, fed upon lost human souls, and winning countless victories over God and man. This is the orthodox Christian view of the subject; but it is one from which the disabused rational understanding turns away with honest disgust. The true philosopher is reverent and silent in the presence of the Incomprehensible. The green world of sense and knowledge where he finds himself placed furnishes employment to all his faculties. He does not deny supernal spheres: he only refuses to make or to

bow down to assertions for which he sees no sufficient foundation. Here he finds the appropriate sphere of his activity: of what is beyond he confesses himself ignorant. The supernaturalist of course knows no more of the beyond than he, but is afflicted with what Socrates called the worst kind of ignorance: the conceit of knowing what one does not know. Prate as men may, the Mystery is there: as deep as ever when the Bible is opened; as dark as ever when the Church has lighted her wax candles.

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## ODD THEODICY.

MR. JAMES FITZJAMES STEPHEN, who is not only a lawyer of standing, but a shrewd and lively writer on themes outside of his profession, has produced a book called "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"; which sets forth a variety of theism that will hardly tend to soothe the troubled minds of the church people. I think I correctly characterised the theological part of the book when I spoke of it the other day to Prof. Newman as "odd theodicy." Odd though it be, Mr. Stephen pleads for it with much apparent earnestness, and does not seem to have any suspicion that it presents to us a "religion of inhumanity," as it has been called by one of his critics. Mr. Stephen, while inferring his God from a contemplation of the universe, is ingenuous enough to admit that "the Author of such a world" cannot be truly or probably asserted to be a purely benevolent being. He does not believe that God is good, in the ordinary acceptation of the word in relation to mankind. "The general constitution of things," including pain, and what



we call wrong, he thinks "is neither just nor unjust, right nor wrong. It simply is. It affects the question of the benevolence, not the question of the justice, of its author. The idea of justice and right is subsequent to the idea of law", &c. Mr. Stephen here makes what is perhaps a good defence of a non-intelligent impersonal God; but it does not seem to me to avail for the Being he has described on page 311 (of the American edition) as possessing mind and will, and so personality, and as having called sentient creatures into existence. These creatures, Mr. Stephen thinks, can have no rights before God, "not even the right of existence"; and God cannot violate justice in regard to them. The expression "not even the right of existence" seems to be employed by this writer to strengthen his assertion that "as against God or fate, whichever you please, men have no rights at all"; as implying that the right of existence is the first and clearest of rights if there be any at all; and that if creatures have not this primal right, they can of course have no other right. I remark on this, I. That it makes an important difference in the argument whether "you please" to suppose a blind "fate" or an intelligent "God" as the source of "the general constitution of things": and II. That "the right of existence" would seem to be precisely the one which the creature

could not have against God ; but III. That, given existence, as in the actual order, derived from an intelligent God, there immediately arises the distinct and indefeasible right to immunity from pain ; for pain in the creature, inflicted or allowed by the Creator, is cruelty, is injustice, is wrong, according to the nature of things, of which we find the perception within us, and which may be called the common-law of the case, the *jus* whose violation is injustice.

## THE SPECTATOR ON THE BELFAST LECTURE.

WHEN the London *Spectator* pronounces that "the 'Unknown and the Unknowable' is discovered, and is matter," it should, I take it, be understood to be uttering a dictum of its own, and not one delivered by Professor Tyndall. That Matter (including Force) contains the limits of man's faculty of knowledge, and that it is unphilosophical to theorise about any existence, knowable or unknowable, beyond Matter, are no doubt just inferences from data supplied by the Professor; but these inferences and these data do not pretend to bring us to any *discovery* of Absolute Existence, as the *Spectator* would fain have its readers understand from its blazonry of the definite article and capitals and quotation marks, when it says—"the 'Unknown and the Unknowable' is discovered." It concludes, it says, from the entire tone of the lecture, that Professor Tyndall is of opinion that Matter is self-existent. A fairer conclusion, I think, would be, that the Professor has no opinion whatever as to how Matter exists. "Any cause for matter

is an inference, a guess, which no scientific man is warranted [in] making." Certainly. A cause is something which observation shows us to have invariably preceded something else which we call its effect. Now as observation does not and can not show us anything preceding Matter, it is unphilosophical to talk about a cause here, and a misapplication of the term "which no scientific man is warranted [in] making." The Professor discerns in Matter "the promise and potency of every form and quality of life." I think that every intelligent and unshackled mind examining the subject must discern the same thing. The potentialities of Matter are to the human mind certainly exhaustless. It is supererogation and folly to limit those potentialities, and invent the abstraction of an immaterial Force to supply the deficiency. The *Spectator* thinks that Professor Tyndall's kind of Matter does not "explain the visible phenomena." It does not make us omniscient, certainly. It does, however, help us to a partial explanation, and one that is satisfactory as far as it goes. It does not explain "the consciousness of free will," complains the *Spectator*. I venture to think that the consciousness of free will is as explicable by it as the consciousness that the earth is stationary. We of to-day have an advantage over the men of old in a knowledge of astronomy and natural philosophy which cor-

rects our seeming "consciousness" that the earth does not move; and we know that it is not a *consciousness* of a fact which is no fact, but an erroneous construction of the evidence yielded by the senses, which misleads uninstructed minds still on the subject of the earth's motion. In like manner, we are blessed now with a biology, a psychology, a phreno-physiology, and a mental philosophy, which, even while the *Spectator* writes, and the churches are rolling their thunder against the profane inroads of science on their sacred ground, are helping us to a more and more searching analysis of "the consciousness of free will," and showing that whatever will is, and in whatever qualified sense freedom may be predicated of it, absolute free will, that is, uncaused, self-determining will, has no more real existence than uncaused brain or uncaused human being.

## DR. DEWEY'S THEISM.

DR. DEWEY, in his remarks upon Mr. Morley's *Voltaire*, which I find in the *Liberal Christian* of Dec. 13, takes the ground now usually occupied by those Liberals who are yet supporters of a definite theism. He says,—“The argument is, that suffering in this world disproves the doctrine of the divine goodness; and fairly carried out it would be, that the least suffering disproves it.” This argument, stated somewhat more amply than Dr. Dewey has here put it, forms indeed one strong position taken by advanced Liberals against the doctrine of the theists. The existence of Evil, comprehending physical and moral suffering, and moral wrong of all sorts besides, constitutes a strong presumption against the view that there is an underived Being, absolute in goodness and wisdom and power, the creator and governor of the universe. Of course, in strict logic, the least bit of Evil taken separately sustains the presumption as really as all Evil considered in its totality. I confess, with due respect for Dr. Dewey and the

many able and good men who hold with him, the presumption seems to me too strong to be overthrown by anything they have hitherto been able to bring against it. Of course there can be no demonstration on either side; and if the existence and character of a First Cause were a legitimate subject for discussion at all,—if we did not perceive in the very naming of the subject that it absolutely precluded the possibility of any sure step or rational conclusion of knowledge,—it could only be at the best a feeble attempt at balancing probabilities. But Dr. Dewey and other advocates of definite theism, as stated above, have a way of shutting their eyes to this fact and setting up their own assumption and referring to it throughout the argument, as if it were even something more, instead of less, than a probability; as if it were something proved, or something in the nature of a moral certainty. “I stand for pure logic”, says the Doctor in the paper before me: “I stand upon the ground of naked truth”, &c. These be brave words; but the immediate sequel shows how far they are from describing their writer’s real position, which is not at all the ground of “pure logic” and “naked truth”, but simply wish, preference, predetermination. In the very next sentence he goes on: “If there is no valid evidence for a good First Cause and for immortal



life, I will go down into darkness and despair, and will die sincere and brave, if I must die in misery." This is very plain. He declares that if the argument goes against him, he will embrace desperation and death rather than admit the conclusion that offends him. This is not the language of a pure seeker of truth: rather is it that of a man of prejudice, wedded to his own darling opinion; anxious indeed that that should be made out to be true, but determined to cling to it still if at last "no valid evidence" remain to support it. It will be seen that Dr. Dewey takes occasion to attach to his doctrine of deity another favourite dogma, that of immortal life. No doubt he feels the futility of relying on logic to establish these traditions, which have always made their appeal to imagination and excited feeling from the judgment of the understanding. Grant certain premises of the theologian, and he can then argue out some at least of his conclusions in a very logical manner; but the logic is always born of the concession; the premises themselves disdain logic. Mr. Leconte, in his recent lectures to prove the personality of the First Cause, affirms for a starting-point, that theism neither requires nor admits of proof. Dr. Dewey himself has said something similar to this, though I cannot now refer to his precise words, nor to the work in which they occur.

The common reply of theists to the argument from the existence of evil, that evil exists because the present order of the universe is impossible without it, is no answer at all. It is a mere begging of the question. Either God was obliged to create the present order of the universe, or he was not obliged to create it. If he was obliged, then he is not the Absolute Being they affirm, and, so far as they and their postulate are concerned, the argument is at an end here. If, on the other hand, he was not obliged (and nearly all theists will say he was not), then it follows that he has chosen to adopt a plan fraught with evil; and, as the free choice of evil is in contradiction to goodness, he is therefore not the perfectly Good Being they affirm. Dr. Dewey repeats the stock plea "that no conceivable world of free, progressive, moral agency *could* be made without exposure to difficulty, interference, collision and pain. Suffering is a necessary element in the problem of freely-wrought moral improvement." The terms "difficulty", "collision", &c. are here employed sophistically to avoid the mention of moral wrong, commonly called *wickedness*, which as well as suffering goes to make up the Evil that constitutes so strong an argument against the assumption of the theists. These bad elements are necessary, we are told, to "the problem of freely-wrought moral im-

provement." But why "the problem" at all? What is this "freely-wrought moral improvement" that Dr. Dewey talks about? Why does it take the monstrous shape of a problem—a rolled-up ball, that is—in which the hand of Deity itself has knotted Good and Bad together, so that both are equally divine? A purely-good world alone can be worthy of a purely-good God. A mixed world, such as ours is, if it point to any God at all, must point to a mixed God. This consideration led men long ages ago to conceive of two coexistent Gods, a good God and an evil God; and to attribute the existing order of things to the two respectively. The theists of to-day, represented by Dr. Dewey, reject this dual conception, and, as it seems to me most unreasonably, insist on inferring one Supreme God of perfect benevolence, wisdom, and power, from a view of the physical and moral universe. The fundamental mistake, I think, is in attempting an inference where from the nature of the case no inference can legitimately be drawn. The universe indeed abounds in facts from which we may properly draw inferences within its own order; but of anything outside of this order it gives us no intimation whatever. There may be a God external to the universe; but that there is such a God is no logical inference from the universe. When I say that there may be this

external God, I of course mean no more than that I can show or know nothing to the contrary. To my mind, there is a shocking irreverence in the common babbling on this theme. And what is all the talk about trinity and unity and personality of God but babbling? What is all ecclesiastical tradition on the subject but raving and, as Coleridge said of Calvinism, superfetation of blasphemy? Following up its cardinal error of undertaking an inference without suitable grounds, Theism is generally found involving itself next in the entanglements of the Free-Will notion; setting up in man himself a second First-Cause as a foil to the first. Out of this most unphilosophical notion proceeds the theory of the "world of free progressive moral agency" spoken of by Dr. Dewey; the theory of that impossible free-will virtue which is so highly rated by the Deity that to allow of its production he sanctioned the maxim *the end justifies the means*, by creating a mundane order to which wickedness and undeserved suffering belong as necessary incidents. Though Dr. Dewey is free from one special difficulty under which Orthodox Christian theists labour at this point, viz.: the having to reconcile free-will virtue with efficacious Divine grace and justification by faith; and though his Deity is altogether a less repulsive abstraction than theirs; yet is he not less than

they under the hoary delusion which degrades by theologising the moral conception of the universe, makes God out of man, sees in man a First Cause in the act of willing, and proclaims for each human worm of the dust the astounding fate of sempiternity.

Towards the close of his remarks in the *Liberal Christian*, Dr. Dewey admits that "the ideas of personality, of intelligence, of goodness, in the First Cause, are to be received with extreme caution, and with the distinct concession that we can know nothing of the mode of their existence or of their working." These words indicate that the difference between him and the people he calls atheists is, that while he "with extreme caution" rehabilitates the Personal God of theology, and passionately exclaims against all who hold back from the religious worship of abstractions, they—the atheists—loving as much as he the beauty of holiness, yearning as strongly as he for divine sympathy and help, wishing as heartily as he that the highest ideals might be realised, the crooked ways made straight, and justice and goodness bring about a Heaven for all sentient beings, are obliged in honesty to avow that the *deus ex machina* he proclaims so loudly is not only unproved, but, if we jump all

the logic of the case and assume his existence, is essentially a distinct being from the First Cause, the Infinite ; as must be any being that man is capable of imagining. I do not say there is no imaginable God ; but I say the Infinite is not imaginable. When Dr. Dewey speaks of "the two parties on this question," and of one of them ascribing this universe "to nothing," he must be held to a strict account of terms. Does he mean that the party he objects to holds that this universe came at some period out of nothing ? which would be a positive doctrine of origin ; or does he mean that the party refuses to assign any origin whatever for the universe ; declares that its beginning is as inscrutable as its end ; that as to any origin or outside to it, that is absolutely unsearchable and even inconceivable ? [The word "universe" is here of course used in its very widest possible sense, including worlds, systems, —in short, All Nature.] If he supposes himself in conflict with persons who hold that there was a point in time or eternity when there was nothing, and that out of that nothing the universe came into existence, he is probably fighting a phantom of his own imagination : at least I know of no one now-a-days who maintains that Something was made out of Nothing, except theists, and Dr. Dewey is not contending against theists. But when he speaks of ascribing the universe to



nothing, he probably means the refusal to assign any specific origin to the universe. This he considers not so good in logic as to suppose "a principle which, in whatever respects unknown, must be conceived of as embracing in it an infinite wisdom and goodness." But how can logic carry us outside of the universe anyhow? Logic is an exercise of the human mind within its own order, which is the order of nature, the universe. If the supposed *primordium* be outside of this order, it is quite beyond the cognisance of the human mind, and so no subject of logic whatever. As a human idea, the *primordium* is within the order of the universe, and so an *ens rationis*: let logic deal with it in this light, and what do we find? The supposed "principle", if real, must be a principle *in* the universe. Dr. Dewey does not give us any logical process which fairly results in such a principle as its conclusion. He would infer an uncreated creative principle from the existence of the universe: not a sound inference; since we know no more of uncreated creative principle than of uncreated universe. Next, he would infer "infinite wisdom and goodness" in the originating principle from the aspect of the universe, which he calls "full of beneficence and intelligence": unsound again, and in the very premiss. The aspect of the universe is not what he says it is. It is not



“*full* of beneficence and intelligence”; but has wide room for and actually displays a vast extent of the opposite qualities. Plague, pestilence and famine, battle, murder, pain, cruelty, triumphant injustice, affliction of the innocent, ignorance, folly, wrong of all sorts, abound in that little spot of the universe with which we are acquainted. If a principle of Goodness be necessary to account for goodness in the universe, then a principle of Badness must be necessary to account for badness in the universe. If the unknown principle “must be conceived of as embracing in it an infinite wisdom and goodness” when we look on the fair side of the universe, must it not in equal strictness of logic “be conceived of as embracing in it an infinite” unwisdom and badness when we look on the foul side? Dr. Dewey’s “little text” does not answer the argument at all. “The plan of suffering in the system” is *not* vindicated, regarded as the intelligent “plan” of an All-powerful Personal Being; but a calm view of man as he is, and of the universe in relation to all its sentient parts, is overwhelmingly against the doctrine of theism in all its Christian phases at least. It may be worth while here to refer to the recently promulgated opinion of Mr. James Fitzjames Stephen; who in his book entitled “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”, declares his belief in a Deity as the author

of the universe, but gives up the attribute of goodness as commonly understood.

“But,” says Dr. Dewey, “most of those who call in question all past reasonings concerning God still admit that there is a God—admit, that is to say, that there is a First Cause.” Are there any, I would ask Dr. Dewey, who do “call in question all past reasonings concerning God”? The Doctor seems quietly to assume that “all past reasonings” have been on his side; but in truth, his theism has always been matter of dispute among reasoners, and though the scientific men of our day present the latest phase of the argument, reinforced with fresh illustration, and adapted to a more widely enlightened popular intelligence, yet it is the old, old argument still. Philosophy neither affirms nor denies a First Cause. *Cause* is a term of succession. Priority and invariableness of antecedence are the necessary elements which combine in the notion of a cause. Ignorance has dabbled in prosopopœia and invented gods many and lords many; but Philosophy has never yet been able to trace anything to a god, much less to a First God. The pretence of doing so is grossly unphilosophical. Where we can no longer follow the order of sequences the term *causes* has no longer significance. If when we have reached the bounds of the universe our inclination lead us to guess at

something beyond, that is, properly speaking, no *cause* of the universe: it is not something which we have observed to be invariably followed by the production of a universe: it is only an abstraction which we conceive of as next to the universe. We may have an endless series of such abstractions, but no one of them can be, philosophically speaking, a *cause*: how, then, is it possible to reach a First Cause in the Unknowable? "No one of the English scientists denies it," says Dr. Dewey. Probably not; for the English scientists remember the limits of the human mind, and refrain from dogmatising on the subject. As to Comte and Strauss, whom the Doctor also refers to: the former's fanciful "Religion of Humanity" does not pretend to transcend the universe; and Strauss expressly declares that logical thinking can never carry us outside of this Cosmos. "If," says the great German, "everything in the universe has been caused by something else, and so on, *ad infinitum*, what we finally reach is not the conception of a Cause of which the Cosmos is an effect, but of a Substance of which individual cosmical phenomena are but the accidents. We reach *not a deity*, but a self-centred Cosmos."

## EXCLUSIVE SALVATION.

I HAD a talk last night with W—— S—— on Exclusive Salvation. Like many other Catholics, he thinks it reconcilable with the faith of the Church to believe in the salvation of Protestants. Yet he seems to hold that atheists must be damned. Now if he had any friends among atheists, as he has among Protestants, his benevolence, and unconsciously his sense of justice, would, I have no doubt, cause him to adulterate his creed with a yet larger mingling of humanity, so as to admit atheists themselves within the pale of a possible salvation. He knows many Protestants who are obviously as upright and deserving as the best of his Catholic acquaintances; his instinct of right, as well as his benevolence, forbids him to believe that these good Protestants will be lost forever because they have not the Catholic faith; and so he takes refuge in the flimsy notion, only just short of formal heresy, that there may be sincere Protestants who are invincibly ignorant of the true faith, and who would gladly embrace it if they could know it;

and who consequently may be saved without having actually held it in this world. It may well be doubted that this notion, which is very popular with American Catholics at the present day, has ever been seriously entertained for themselves by any considerable number of sound Catholic divines. That multitudes of the laity comfort their hearts with it, and fondly conceit that they have by means of it purged their doctrine of uncharitableness, there can be no doubt whatever. But in a philosophic view, when the intellect is not overbalanced by the moral sentiments or the feelings, the fallacy of the notion, from the stand-point of Catholic doctrine, is the clearest thing possible. In the first place, it is a great mistake to suppose, as many do, that the Church teaches this notion. The Church teaches no such thing. She declares explicitly that out of her pale is no salvation. That she permits such of her children as can avail themselves of the comfort of this specious notion of exceptional salvation to do so; that individuals among her clergy may without public rebuke preach and publish it as confidently as if it were Catholic doctrine; is very true. The Church is wise in her day and generation. She is aware that the speculation in question tends to soothe anxious minds within the fold, and to conciliate outsiders. So, never committing herself to it,

she tolerates it and lets it be. This is very different from affirming it. If there were a similar usefulness in believing that two and two make five, or that of contraries both may be true, she would display a like complaisance in permitting it to her children; for she is the guardian only of the faith, and not of logic or mathematics. He is a poor reasoner who, accepting the Catholic doctrine, holds the salvation of Protestants; but his error is not immediately an error against faith, and so the Church is not called upon to condemn it. This, however, is certain: it is not her teaching. In the second place, the notion is, in itself considered, a very flimsy conceit, as I have before intimated. I risk nothing in asserting that a Protestant *invincibly ignorant* of the Catholic religion is an impossible abstraction. Such a being may be dreamed of, may be imagined by a tender-hearted Catholic, but has no existence in the world of realities. The most ignorant know or may know this religion which the Church declares to be "before all things necessary to salvation." It is diffused throughout the world, preached and known everywhere; and if at the present day any man or woman of ordinary intelligence rejects it, the fact of such rejection is, according to the most approved theologians, evidence in the particular case that the soul is not fit for the grace of faith, and so not

fit for heaven. It is of inspiration, that *they that seek shall find*; and St. Liguori, a standard authority, declares that if the heretic would seek it, "God would *without doubt* pour upon him His light concerning the true religion [*Deus, absque dubio, infunderet in illum lumen suum de vera religione*]." Moreover: it has been constantly held in the Catholic Church, that salvation is extremely difficult of attainment by Christians in possession of all the helps and means of grace afforded by the sacramental institutions and offices of their religion. The infallible word itself makes the fearful revelation that of the many that are called, few are chosen. St. Remigius expressly says, that few adult Christians are saved. Now if salvation is so doubtful and rare *in* the church, and with all the precious helps that God himself has supernaturally provided, what must it be *out* of the fold, and without those inestimable advantages? Even if the want of the true faith could be pardoned to a Protestant, and his human qualities of honesty and sincerity be generally accepted in place of the supernatural life the Catholic is required to live, is it conceivable that he should escape those mortal sins which, without the want of the faith, hinder and preclude salvation among Catholics? If the Catholic can hardly by possibility escape damnation, is it not in the nature of a moral certainty



that the Protestant must be lost? The Protestant who should be saved would have been an angelic being; and that God should have withheld from this willing and immaculate soul the grace of the true faith, and suffered all its goodness to redound to the credit of heresy and human nature, is surely not quite in accordance with what the Church unequivocally teaches and Catholics are bound to believe. And what force or meaning is there in the unvarying declaration of the Church that her faith is necessary to salvation, if men may be saved through their sincerity and honesty without it? And wherein lies the incomparable excellence of being a Catholic, if human virtue outside of the church is so efficacious? W—— S—— is obliged to hold the necessity of baptism, and that the unbaptised Protestant is hopelessly excluded from heaven: but if baptism is essential, why not the faith? If it is not inconsistent with the Divine attributes to exclude a man from above for what would appear to us the accident of his being unbaptised, why should it be inconsistent with those attributes to exclude him for the want of the true faith? Ah! my amiable friend is not aware of the real difficulty in the case; and I could do no more than hint it to him in our conversation, for fear of bringing a wasp's nest about my ears. No mind that has a fair proportion of both intelligence and bene-

volence can accept in all its monstrous fulness the doctrine of Everlasting Damnation. If this doctrine as held among Protestants could be true, there would be no incredibleness or absurdity in any part of the Catholic system ; no more in Exclusive Salvation than in any other article ; for then our healthy instincts of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, would not be trustworthy : reason might be unreason, love hate, and “ mystery ” a cover for the wildest moral perversions. The way that men deal with it manifests what it is. Other dogmas that are simply absurd are swallowed without difficulty ; but to get this down, we are obliged to modify it for ourselves, accepting it generally in a technical sense, but making it of no effect in familiar cases. The Protestant believes in the damnation of strangers, but not of his acquaintances : the Catholic bows to the Church’s dictum that there is no salvation for heretics ; but makes an exception in favour of his own comrades and friends, whom he supposes to be “ invincibly ignorant,” never mind how intelligent and thoughtful they are. Unfortunately for my peace of mind, at one time, I could not help seeing that such a course is only an evasion, a begging of the question, a blinking of the true issue from beginning to end. It was obvious to me as a Catholic, I. That the Church does not assert the existence of any single case of

“invincible ignorance” of the true faith, past, present, or to come: II. That she is very far from saying that such “invincible ignorance”, if there were any such case, would enable a man to get to heaven; since she assures us that multitudes in her bosom are every day losing their souls through other causes than the rejection of the faith; and since, according to the uncensured opinion of some of her ablest theologians, this very *ignorance* might be imputed to men for sin by God who sent Pharaoh’s hardness of heart,<sup>1</sup> and whom the scripture speaks of as sending in other cases “strong delusion” among men, “that they might be damned.”<sup>2</sup> In fine, I perceived and felt, that upon Catholic (I may add, and Evangelical) principles, the prospect of a future life is replete with a horrible uncertainty; that salvation is most truly a subject for fear and trembling, as the Apostle describes it;<sup>3</sup> and this, whether we believe in the necessary condemnation of heretics or not. It was in vain that I said to myself that it was my sole concern to secure my own salvation, and that I should leave all such inscrutable matters alone. I was a man, I must take my lot with my brethren; and indeed, if they were lost with all the goodness I knew them to possess, why not I too—why not anything?

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xiv. 4, 8, 17.    <sup>2</sup> II Thess. ii. 11, 12.    <sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 12.

## THE CHRISTIAN CONTROVERSY.

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UNDERLYING every religion that has set up a cultus or asserted an authority among men, may be found the postulate of a great Will-Power outside of and dominating nature; and, growing out of this, the further assumption of an Infallible Oracle on earth to teach men religious truth.

Until man obtains a true perception of the limit of his own faculties, he naturally strains after the impossible, in speculation as in action. To the early man, with unchastened blood, slender experience, and no science, such a perception was clearly out of the question; and with us who live to-day, heirs of all the ages, the application of it as a curb for the headstrong steed Imagination remains a most difficult and doubtful performance. It is no wonder then if, not content with learning the secrets of earth and stars, and bringing the speech of day and the wisdom of night to bear more and more on the natural phenomena which are his only material of knowl-

edge, man still aims to overtop the universe, whose "flaming wall" serves but to vex his spirit with a sense of restraint. The cognoscible, with all its breadth and grandeur, is too small a realm to hold him in. Above and beyond, he discerns an ineffable glory, wherein his own attributes are enthroned in awful majesty. Then man adores his God, the Creator of the universe; and as, for man, there could be no God without man himself, so by a necessary process human destiny becomes a prime concern of the Divine activity. Though unconscious of the identity of subject and object, man is not able to separate them in such a way as to conceive of God as indifferent to humanity. God cares for what man thinks and does and says; and man likewise is interested in the thought and action of Deity, and expects some word to come down to him concerning them. And so, the word of God descends from the skies, and man has a supernatural revelation.

Now to be good and to do good is the conscious duty of man by virtue of his original constitution, which can dispense with any external revelation so far as that is concerned. The business of revelation is to enlighten man as to something over and above goodness, to add some knowledge of supersensible facts and relations to the teachings of his own nature. This something

which is more than goodness, this knowledge which could not be reached by unassisted human nature, is to be propounded by oracular authority and received by faith supplanting reason.

These prolegomena furnish us with a beginning for the Natural History of Religion,—a work beyond the ambition of the pen which is here directed to the much humbler task of setting forth a few reflections on some of those unfoldings of the religious principle with which we are most familiar, and of pointing out how the laws of mind appear and reappear amid the varying lights and shadows which a view of Christianity presents. There has probably never been any other religion presenting so admirable a combination of spirituality and carnality as this Christianity of ours. To this cause chiefly may be attributed its great success in the world. The most characteristic working of the Christian idea is displayed in Roman Catholicism. It tolerates no idolatry besides its own. It hates gross paganism and wars against it to the death. But it loves not that lofty flight of the soul in which, soaring away from all idols, she loses herself in the supernal spheres. The unreligious spiritualist,<sup>1</sup> with a reverence so profound that he cannot

<sup>1</sup> The word *spiritualist* is used here not in the present popular sense of spiritist, or ghost-hunter, but in the legitimate sense in which it is the correlative of *materialist*.

call God a person; the rationalist, who, not rejecting the personality, denies the alleged conversations of Deity with man; the Unitarian, who, admitting personal divine communications, shrinks from incarnating the Supreme; the Evangelical Protestant, who adores not only a person but a man: these are all anathema to the Catholic; whose more religious faith sees the personal Father in heaven, converses with the God-man Christ on earth, and swallows the same being in the sacrament of the altar.

Christians have not been behind other religionists in asserting an Oracle or teacher of revelation among men. Their conflicting theories on this subject are well worthy of an attentive examination from our present point of view. They are, briefly, three in number; for there is probably no Christian modification of the Rule of Faith which may not be brought under one or another of the following divisions: first, Private Inspiration; second, the Bible interpreted by the judgment of each man for himself; third, a Seer or Corporation, supernaturally commissioned and illuminated to be the living Teacher of all. Had Heaven indeed made a "revelation" to man, it would of course have been the same as to the same matters to all for whom it was intended. One part of it could not have been in opposition to another part; for of con-



traditions only one can possibly be true, and truth is of the essence of a divine revelation. Again: such a revelation must have been adapted, in itself and in the mode of its delivery, to the capacity of all to whom it was addressed. An inaudible or unintelligible "word," whether of God or man, can be no "revelation" at all. The divine message must have been spoken within men individually, or else declared in the plainest terms to the multitude by external communication adapted to the apprehension, the grasping power, of all alike. These premises have an important bearing on the claims of the several theories among Christians as to the Rule of Faith.

The first of these theories, private inspiration, gives us the sect of Friends or Quakers; a body whose rare honour among Christians it is to be free from bloodshed; who seem nearest of all to "the simplicity that is in Christ;" and whose virtues deserve that they should always be mentioned with respect. Their doctrine of personal illumination will not however stand the test of examination. The question is here about an infallible oracle to teach supernatural doctrine; and overwhelming human experience crushes the notion that would separate the Spirit of Truth into many such oracles in many minds; which notion, besides, must ever lack the argumenta-

tive basis of common ground for an appeal. Quakers and others who hold this theory divide in their doctrines as well as those Christians who proclaim an external authority. The second theory is asserted for the great body of Protestants who hold to the Infallible Oracle. The Bible is given by inspiration of God, and is therefore infallibly true in all its teachings, whatever they conflict with. The divine revelation is to be got by searching its pages, the words of which are to be interpreted by each mind for itself. This is the theory of Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and all besides who are called Evangelical Protestants. It is the theory also of Universalists, and is accepted by Unitarians of the right wing. We say it is the *theory* of these Christians: in practice, however, it breaks down from the very beginning. It is not tenable for a moment even, save on the huge assumption that a certain book now in our possession, which we call the Bible, is a literal communication from God; and taking this assumption for granted, it is impossible to avoid seeing the pains which Protestants take to prevent the private interpretation of the Bible from being really the Rule of Faith as they say it is. Most of us know something of the machinery of Sunday-schools, and of the sectarian drilling that is in vogue in the families of Protestants who are

in earnest about their religion. The child of Evangelical parents learns the Catechism, not the Bible. He is instructed, not by the word of God, but by the word of man;—the word of his elders at home, of his Sunday-school teacher, of the pastor of his church. He reads the Bible no doubt; but it is with the note and comment of his teachers; and he is not allowed to find in the sacred text any doctrine different from what they tell him it contains. They have their own opinions on the subject; they embody those opinions in what they consider a digest of Bible doctrine; and in this digest, the Catechism, they press and mould the child's pliant mind into a certain shape of doctrine, trusting that when he is old he will not depart from it. And very commonly he cannot depart from it at mature age, any more than Chinese ladies can recover the right shape and power of their feet which have been distorted in their infancy. How idle it is to talk of the Bible as the Rule of Faith! This book could not have been put into the hands of the people before the two inventions of paper and printing. For many centuries, only a few could possibly read it, fewer still possibly understand it. There had to be spiritual teachers standing between the people and the alleged revelation, to tell the former what the latter is. And how much better off are we in this matter to-day? Are not our religions

still made for us by our fallible fellow-men, and put on us with our other baby-clothes when we have no choice in the matter? Who would ever conceive of an obligation to keep Sunday, the first day of the week, as a religious holiday, if he took his Christianity from the Bible? And how should we ever know which of the ancient writings we are to call sacred, and which profane, if the infallible Catholic Church, or the fallible Protestant Church, did not kindly save us the trouble of deciding for ourselves by forestalling the question with its *ipse dixit*?

This brings us to the third theory of the Rule of Faith, viz., a Seer or Corporation, supernaturally illuminated and commissioned to be the Living Teacher of all. Clearly, man's only monitor within is conscience; and conscience, though competent to pronounce against the divinity of a given proposition falling within the sphere of morals, is without any miraculous touchstone to try doctrines in metaphysics. If there be an infallible oracle on earth to teach supernatural doctrine, it must be external to man who is to be taught. We have seen that the Bible is not and cannot be such a teacher. It cannot establish its own claim to inspiration and authority; it has no voice of its own, but another must speak for it if it is to be heard; and by the necessity of the case, when it is set up as an oracle, the attempt

results inevitably in the substitution of some living authority instead of it, as the real teacher. An immediate book revelation supposes a pasigraphy and universal enlightenment; neither of which has ever been enjoyed by our race. More than this, the pasigraphy would have to be free from ambiguity and change, and the enlightenment preternatural to say the least; for otherwise the qualities of clearness, adaptedness, and certainty, which we have found to be necessary characteristics of the divine revelation, would be absent. The Oracle must be accessible to all, and its divinity must be a fact clearly attested to all. These conditions are obviously not fulfilled in the Bible. The original writings of which the several parts of our Bible purport to be copies have long been out of existence. The first copies are also lost. The languages of the primitive documents are absolutely sealed to the vast proportion of Christians, and in many of their idioms and connexions are full of obscurity to our most accomplished scholars. What remain to us are imperfect transcripts by very questionable hands, and translations of these copies of copies, in which nothing short of infallibility can distinguish between the genuine text and the glosses of rabbinical and monkish annotators which are mingled with it. The Scriptures refer in different places to other writings as of similar value

and authority : what has become of them ? Can the Word of God pass away and be lost ? We have them not ; and there are various gospels and epistles which we might bind up with those we have in the Bible, since they are of like character and pretensions, but which we slight as spurious or doubtful, because certain divines have called them so : and we receive our Bible, at last, on the authority of these confessedly fallible divines and their disciples ; thus making them, instead of God, the vouchers for the Oracle. It is an indisputable fact, moreover, that these guarantors not only may err, but do err, in what they give us under the name of The Bible. In considering what writings they shall include under this head, and what reject, they are evidently only a body of debaters, whose decision, in the highest view we can take of it, can give us no more than a probability ; and in making their rendering of the writings into the vernacular tongue, we find them dividing on several conflicting versions ; the one most widely accepted among Protestants in Great Britain and America, King James's Bible, as it is called, being proved to contain numerous and glaring errors. There is, then, no infallible Bible in existence ; though there are many erring bibles, which are regarded by Christians as having come from heaven somehow, as the shields in the Roman temple were



regarded by the people as having fallen from the skies. It is considered very wicked to question the divinity of these bibles before the public; and thus rendered inviolable, they lie like Grand Lamas in households and churches, and form a shibboleth for pious lips abroad. But logically and justly, they are no Rule at all.

The third theory, that of the Seer or Corporation, is much superior, in *primâ facie* plausibleness at least, to the others. Any system that is to be more than inert material, any that is to exert a didactic sanction of its own, must appeal to the principle of personal authority; and there is, correspondent to this need, a general tendency in men's minds to accept a personal standard, to follow leaders, to believe in some one here or there as possessing an unction which raises him above the rest and calls for homage and for faith. It is written of the earliest Christians, the immediate followers of Jesus himself, that this sentiment of dependence on him, their chosen master, was expressed by one of them, Peter, in the question and affirmation,—“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!” Whatever the theory of an organised philosophy or religion, its authority is always, for the great body of its adherents, of the personal kind. This is openly confessed when the crowd follows one man as a prophet. It is unconsciously manifest-



ed, as we have seen in considering the Bible question, when men gravitate from an ideal standard to a real dependence on their fellow-men as the keepers, witnesses, and expounders of a revelation. Whatever may be fancied or asserted on the subject, therefore, the real rule of faith for Christians, as for all other active religionists, is personal teaching, embodying some modification or other of the hierarchal principle: from which it follows, that the theory of the Seer or Corporation is the most logical and consistent of the three views of the Rule of Faith which we have brought together for discussion in this paper.

There are no individual claims in our day that need detain us long from an examination of the corporate form of the Oracle. The greatest of seers in modern times—Swedenborg—has been dead a hundred years. He has no successor among us, though the age spawns miracle-workers and “mediums” with a fecundity that is truly startling. The Book of Mormon has been “found,” like the Book of the Law of the Old Testament (II Chron. xxxiv. 14); and the system to which it belongs has had its temple, its prophets, and its fresh revelations, for years; but our readers will, we are sure, excuse us from dwelling on its pretensions here. Such personages as A. J. Davis and T. L. Harris have their

following certainly ; but they do not correspond to what we are looking into under the designation of the Rule of Faith ; and the lesser lights of Spiritism can rise no nearer to the level of our inquiry than the divining damsel whose trade Paul spoilt in his visit to Philippi. The theory of the Oracle is a supernaturalist theory ; and any view of it which does not rise above nature, or which fails to connect it with Jesus Christ, is excluded from the category within which we are to look for the Christian Rule of Faith. The path which we have followed from the outset brings us now at last to the conception of a divine Corporation as a depositary and interpreter of the divine revelation. This Corporation is called in Christian language the Church : and if the reader has carefully held to the thread of our argument from the beginning, he is by this time prepared to see that the Church is the logical sequel of the assertion that there is on earth an Infallible Oracle to teach men Christian truth. (The expression "*Christian truth*" is here used, as the catena from Christ was spoken of a little way back, because we are in this essay confined to the *Christian* phases of religious development.) And now, what is the Church, in the sense of our inquiry ? Not a mere society of believers, banded together for sympathy, convenience, and brotherly edification. Not a tri-

bunal of elders, to watch over morals and strive prayerfully for the preservation of what they take to be sound doctrine. Not even a bench of bishops in lawn sleeves, through whose consecrated hands may be supposed to descend a mysterious power of succession. Any one of these bodies may be *a* very respectable church; but THE CHURCH is different from and transcends them all.

Supernaturalist Christianity demands, in the first place, a divine miraculousness in Jesus Christ, as the author and finisher of the faith; and then, as Jesus was not to survive his generation on earth, a perpetuation and assurance of his teaching by means of an Oracle connected with him by identity of doctrine at least, and founded either by him or by God from whom he came. We have found the Church to be the necessary embodiment of the oracular principle at the root of Christianity. That this Corporation, the Church, must possess the discriminating function of infallibility in order to discern and set forth the supernatural revelation, is one of the necessities of the case. The Oracle, to teach us what we are to believe, must have a voice or organ; and this voice or organ must be oracular, that is, of the nature of the Oracle: in other words, it must possess an inherent divinity to secure it against any error in the doctrine it is

appointed to communicate to us from the supernatural source. To say that it has such divinity is to say that, as a doctrinal teacher, it is infallible. Now then for the Infallible Church. As there are many bibles, so there are many churches also ; but among the latter, one towers so high above all the rest, and is so exclusively in possession of certain attributes which are essential to the constitution of the spiritual Teacher we are in search of, that we are compelled to the conclusion that if this one is not the Infallible Church, *a fortiori* no other is. This conspicuous Church of churches, on the maintenance of whose claims to be the divinely-sent Teacher of the nations the whole fabric of the Infallible Oracle depends, is the Latin communion with the Pope at its head, whose last great Council has just been held at Rome. No other Christian body occupies the necessary place in history. What is called Modern History dates from Jesus Christ. As far back as its annals are clear, this great Corporation stands out in bold relief as the one central spiritual authority of Christendom ; its visible head, the Pope, acting as the representative of Jesus Christ and recognised as such by potentates and peoples and the very heathen themselves. It is impossible to turn away from this city upon a mountain, with all nations flowing unto it, and accept any one of the recalcitrant-

ing bodies of Christians for the Infallible-teaching Church; and to speak of them as being in their severalty "parts of the one Church," is an unworthy evasion of the argument; for there can be no conflicting parts of the one doctrinal authority that is here in question. History shows clearly the beginning of each of the would-be rival communions, unless of one or two Oriental sects whose claims to be the Infallible Teacher it would be a waste of time here to plead against; and when we have dated each, we find the Roman Catholic establishment existing before it, and looming back on those dim ages wherein "primitive Christianity" plays at hide-and-seek with the puzzled learning and research of our nineteenth century. This, cutting off as it does both corporate and doctrinal succession from Christ, is conclusive, from the point of view of the Infallible Corporation, against all the churches besides Roman Catholicism, which the editor of the *Index* has with great propriety called "Christianity in its most highly developed and perfect form." It is here to be observed, however, that only in Ultramontane Catholicism is this true development of the root-principle of Christianity to be found consistently carried out. Gallicanism is but a shilly-shally Protestantism; and so-called Liberal Catholics are half-heretics, whether they know it or not. As well take the motley

and truncated Catholicism imagined by Mr. Baring-Gould for the embodied form of the Oracle, as the free-and-easy plan of the uncloistered monk Hyacinthe, or the less noisy syncretism of many amiable Catholics in our country, whose theory of their Church gives us an eviscerated phantom stuffed with human sympathy and republican principles. The creed of Pius IV., the syllabus of the reigning pontiff, Pius IX., and the decisions of the Vatican Council that has been brought to an untimely adjournment by Victor Emanuel's invasion, present the genuine character and claims of the Infallible Teacher. The true Catholic and logical Christian lives by faith; and the life of faith is distinct from and opposed to the life of sense and reason. Within the sphere of faith, private judgment has no privilege or place. Will and understanding are subjected together to the yoke of spiritual obedience. Self-abnegation and submission to one's superior, though not exacted so constantly and severely in minute particulars, is as clearly the duty of secular Christians as of monks and nuns themselves. What if it be emasculating and beset with perils in a temporal point of view? The business of man enlightened by revelation is to glorify God and save his own soul. Humility, even to the point of stultification, is the appointed way. We are to become little children, fools,



eunuchs, for the kingdom of heaven's sake. So says Christ, so says the Church. If this way of salvation be of God, it must come out right after all. So there should be no fear, on Christian premises, in adopting the Jesuit's maxim and being *perinde ac cadaver* in the hands of our superiors, especially of our spiritual superiors, the confessor, the bishop, above all the Pope, Christ's viceroy, the necessary visible head of the divine Corporation. Jealousy or suspicion of the Pope is not consistent with a hearty faith in the Infallible Oracle; because without the Pope the effective realisation of the Oracle's purpose is impossible. If we believe that God has instituted the Oracle, we must believe also that he can take care of his own without let or hindrance from human infirmity. And so, on Christian principles, faith in the Church and the Pope is at last faith in God himself.

Having thus resolved Christianity into the Papal system, we have arrived at the Christian result of the two-fold postulate from which all religions spring. We have in the early part of our remarks indicated the natural origin of the postulate itself. Starting from the point which it supplies, men have stocked the earth with orthodoxies and heresies, each a psychological study in itself, if one might linger by the way; and all illustrating that important law of diver-



sity which enters into the constitution of the human mind as manifestly as it is contained in all the unfoldings of nature besides. The heresies are detached shoots from the regular growth: the one towering Orthodoxy is the accomplished fact of Christianity. We are profoundly impressed with the truth, that there is no tenable middle ground between the acceptance of the Roman Catholic religion in its fulness and the rejection of Christianity as a supernatural dogmatic system altogether. We wish to put on record our unequivocal protest against the hierarchal principle, and to help, as well as we may, to direct attention to the real battle-ground where Free Thought is to win its crowning victory at last. A certain importance yet remains to Protestant dogmatics from the relation they bear to the moulding and environment of many minds; but dialectically considered, they are very flimsy and worthless. The argument is between the Papal Church and human reason; and here the progress of physical and moral science leaves no room for doubt as to the issue of the controversy. There is indeed a revelation, though it falls in the natural order; and this true gospel has long been undermining the foundations of dogmatic religion. The dogmas have been pruned, twisted, recast; and with every change have lost something of their grappling power. Augustine and

Aquinas, Calvin and Jonathan Edwards, slumber on the back shelves: their voices are no longer heard in public. Men's faith in the Kingdom of Satan is failing every day. "Salvation" is losing its technical sense; and our generation is so cooled down from the fervour and vision of the past as to question if a Roman execution could open heaven any more than a Romish mass. Protestants and Catholics alike have grown sick of the smell of brimstone, and ashamed to carry it away from home in their garments. In the last ten years, a powerful thinker and writer in the bosom of the Catholic Church has published, without condemnation, the opinion that the doctrine of Eternal Torments is not a part of the positive teaching of the Church.<sup>1</sup> Happy change! when men dare no longer proclaim their God to be a Devil.

<sup>1</sup> See *Brownson's Review*, July 1861, Art. III.

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